EQUIP, EMPOWER, & EDUCATE: UNITING THE CHURCH UNDER TRUE BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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by
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United Theological Seminary, 2016

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The project sought to begin the process of healing and restoration from breeches in confidentiality, abuse from the pulpit, and manipulative views regarding the role of leadership at the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church located in Springfield, Illinois. The goal was to equip stronger leaders, empower the congregation to move forward from the injuries of their past, and educate all on the value of Godly leadership. Information for the project was collected through qualitative methods, a teaching series, multiple preaching series, interviews, and developing an annual conference. The project created a vision and training model for the future of the church.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The most difficult part of a project after a three year journey was actually sitting down and reflecting on the path that has been taken knowing that it has come to an end. I do not have words that are sufficient enough to express how I feel at this moment. I must give my Lord and Savior all the glory for this unusual opportunity. When I view my life, I am the most unlikely candidate for this blessing. Nevertheless, God granted me the chance to gain such a wonderful education. I am forever grateful.

To the woman who told me to pursue my dreams, my wife and best friend, Myrissa—I thank you for your faith in my ability. I thank you that even when we were in the worst financial position possible in the beginning of our marriage, you told me not to sacrifice the dream. That one statement has been the motivation for the work that I am continuing to do beyond this moment. I love you so much.

To the mentors of the best group in the United Theological Seminary, Dr. Keith Lawrence and Dr. Kenneth Marcus—I thank you for being mentors that created a space for a young man who in many ways did not know who he was as a person and a pastor. I did not know what to think in the beginning. Some times, I felt like the son that was not getting any traction. However, you both never let me stay in my feelings. You shared so much from your personal journeys and pour buckets of wisdom into my life. For those reasons and so much more, I am grateful.

To Dr. Donnell Moore—I thank you, sir, for being an ear that I have been able to call on at any given moment. Thank you for talking me down off of some cliffs and reassuring me about my journey. It is not always easy to see how close you are to the Promised Land when you are going through challenges. I thank you for being light on this path.

To my pastor, Dr. Charles E. Booth—I thank you so much for what you mean to my life. You have literally watched me grow up from birth to doctorate. It is unbelievable to imagine that you have had a hand in every major season of my life. I am more grateful now for your wisdom at this stage of my life. You impact on the world has been invaluable to so many people including young preachers like me. Thank you for your example and encouragement to enter into this phase of academia.

To the best group in the Doctor of Ministry program—thank you, family, for giving me a place that I can finally find out who I am as a preacher, pastor, and man. Thank you for all of the time that we have share through conversation, debate, prayer, and the various moments of our lives during this journey. This part of the road is only the beginning of what God is birthing in us as a group and colleagues in this ministry.

I was raised as an only child. My father has other children, but I have never met them. I have always had the feeling that I was meant to be a sibling. Some people have made me a big brother. Others have taken me in as a little brother. I thank God for the three brothers that have been given to me in this season of my life—Dr. Jonathan J.H. McReynolds, Pastor Derrick K. Holmes, and Pastor Marvin O. Hodges.

You three men have stood with me in very momentous and painful times of my life. Everyone is not as blessed like me to have friends that stick closer than blood. Thank you for your prayers, real talk, and love through this period and beyond.

To my research team, Alexis White, Fallon Rowl, Reverend Robert Timms, Reverend Guy Williams, Michael Smith, Jackie Brown, and Katie Beard—you are the best group that a pastor could hope for a project of this magnitude. Your input in this process has been great. I have learned a great deal about the talent and gifting that we have in Pleasant Grove. Thank you for your sacrifice of time, energy, and resources throughout this period.

To the Pleasant Grove church—it is not easy to go through a transition. It is not simple to gain a pastor who is going through a personal growing process. Many times, I have had to take time to finish a task that began before I arrived to Springfield. The dedication of time and effort can be a serious grind. However, I am so grateful for the privilege to be your pastor and your support throughout the process.

To my mother, Teresa, and my grandparents, Charles and Cleona Wilson—thank you for the prayers and support throughout my scholastic career. I pray that I have pride to our family and validity to our legacy. I love you all.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to two people that mean the most to me in this world—my wife, Myrissa K. Ferguson, and my son, Charles Jeremiah Ferguson. Myrissa, you are the heartbeat that makes our family run. Without you in my life, all things that I have ever pursued would prove to be worthless. You have been on this road of life with me longer than our marriage. You are my lover, friend, and greatest supporter (I know you hate the term cheerleader). I pray that this work is a return on your investment in me. I love you and thank God for what He is praying to do your life. Remember, it is your time now.

C. J., you will not be able to read this work yet. Man, you are not even two years old yet. I think you might be interested in what your old man might have to say about the things of God. Until then, I want you to know that you are a major reason why I work as hard as I do.

One of my favorite times of my day is our bedtime routine. When we sit down, I am constantly praying about what I can tell you that will stick in your mind. Regardless of what truths I share with you, my true prayer for you is that you become the man that God has designed for to be in this world. I pray that I will always be a father you can look at with pride. I love you.

INTRODUCTION

Problems in the life of the church are not uncommon. As long as human beings are engaged with any type of organizational activity, the likelihood exists that conflicts and dysfunctionality can occur. In church life, people who claim to follow Jesus Christ are constantly wrestling with continued growth and development in their faith while experiencing the unfolding of an atmosphere that does not always reflect the body of Christ that is claimed through Scripture and practice.

The Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is not unlike many churches in the world. The congregation has had a long history in the Springfield, Illinois community. The church has gone through various transitions throughout its 120 year history. However, the local body has undergone a major shift in leadership.

After fifteen years of leadership, the former pastor of Pleasant Grove decided to leave the church. Many people were saddened and hurt by the departure. Yet, the exit was not without controversy and challenges.

Throughout the tenure of this particular pastor, many people became associated with the church. His charisma was undeniable. His demeanor in the eyes of many people very down to earth in the beginning. Various programs were started in order to reach the community such as the clothing pantry, after school tutoring, summer camps, and street evangelism. All of these activities were definite signs of an active church. However, time proved that activity was a cover for a lack of theology and commitment to God.

During the pastorate, the former leader was confronted about his academic credentials and his theology on various subject matter. Many times, he refused to answer any challenging theological questions on the basis of his authority as the pastor. He insulted people for being inquisitive about various aspect of the Bible. The parishioners were considered immature for attempting to challenge his position. The practice of this level of bravado was a cover for the lies that were told about his education. Though he was given an honorary doctorate through a ceremony, the pastor did not receive as much as an associate degree until he arrived in Springfield.

The understanding exists that the ability to pastor a congregation is not rooted strictly in having an education. Many churches have been successful in fulfilling their service to God with pastors that did not have the ability to expand their academic pursuits. Nevertheless, the challenge that Pleasant Grove faced was addressing the harmful effects of a manipulative and deceitful leader.

Since the transition, Pleasant Grove has revealed some of the deficiencies that the congregation possesses regarding leadership, unity, and progression. The challenge that is presented is three fold.

1. What is the best method for educating the believer about what God desires from leadership and congregation?
2. How will the people be received being equipped for service beyond the church building?
3. Will the people be prepared to be empowered to fulfill the purpose and destiny for their individual lives and the life of Pleasant Grove?

This written work attempts to offer a method by which a congregation can experience restoration from the past, a new outlook on the future, and a greater

opportunity to witness how God fulfills the purpose of the church through biblical perspectives.

In the beginning of this written work, readers will discover how God matched a wounded pastor with a wounded people. Both sides of this equation are attempting to find how to help and learn from one another. Both are attempting to overcome past trust issues, emotional pain, and church hurt to find a level ground to worship, fellowship, and advance the church.

Through the process, the Bible will give will give indication about how the outsider feels when having a genuine encounter with God. It will also unveil how people long for the days of genuine worship in the midst of trying times.

The project will offer various perspectives on perception of effective leadership. History will reveal that character is necessary from the positions of authority. Methods will present how encouragement builds those who serve, and they will show how blind trust can produce toxic environments where dictators can flourish.

Ultimately, this project is to develop a model that will address church hurt, leadership deficiencies, and membership empowerment. These goals will be accomplished through the following avenues:

- Educating the congregation about the role and responsibilities of pastoral and church leadership.
- Promoting tools to aid in establishing trust between leadership and congregation, and healing from past circumstances.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Every congregation has been presented with a challenge. Congregations are challenged to fulfill the commission Jesus presented in Matthew. The church is to present the Gospel and equip disciples to do the same. Many times, congregations endure many problems that can make fulfilling the Great Commission a monument obstacle.

In moments like these, pastors and leadership must assess how to move forward in achieving growth and viability in faith community. Pleasant Grove is a congregation facing its own unique challenges to become a people prepared to reach the greater community for Jesus Christ.

Many pains and circumstances were highlighted to show suffering that has been endured for many years. For Pleasant Grove, this new season provides a fresh moment to remove the pain of the past and look toward a future of growth, development, and healing.

As the pastor of this congregation, I am honored to he in the position to aid in this transition. However, the reality exists that much work is yet to be accomplished. This transition is about two parties coming together. This season is about two distinct stories providing a unique backdrop toward change and healing that has not yet be realized.

Looking at Pleasant Grove, one may see group of people that have a willingness to love one another. Many people may encounter individuals whom will go to any lengths

to make certain that needy have provisions; the hungry are fed; and the thirsty are hydrated. However, the countless moments emotional and spiritual pain has wounded the caring people.

Past pastoral leadership has scarred many people. Stories of private pain have been shared across the pulpit. Counseling sessions became public knowledge. The church house became a clubhouse for many private interests. Greater separation occurred between the haves and the have-nots. Quiet resentment for tradition began to grow.

Pleasant Grove identified itself as another influential church in the Springfield community lacking Biblical teaching and preaching. Church leadership has shared that they lack the knowledge that the Bible provides on being effective leaders and disciples. Pleasant Grove is passionate and ready to move forward. Yet the question remains. How does this context move forward?

As the new pastor assumes his role, the reality exists that his story and history will play a role in the transition toward a greater day. However, the personal journey presents many experiences that might be beneficial to change that the church seeks.

As a wounded leader, the love and care of a different context provides a safe space to examine how to approach change, growth, and development. When a pastor begins to question his or her viability and effectiveness in leadership, it becomes difficult to be open to embracing people without hesitation.

Whenever close advisors, confidants, or peers betray a leader, walls are built before the next group who desire to embrace the gift of God living within the leadership vessel. That pain and hurt is not easily forgotten, nor is it feeling that any effective leader desires to embrace for any extended period of time.

The joining of pastor and people becomes a laboratory for mixing journeys, joys, hurt, disappointments, and hope. Each side of the equation is looking for signs of something different. Each side is looking for the hope of being embraced where they are in their journeys. Each entity believes that this moment will be the one that changes the course of the status quo.

However, the tension exists that this time might be similar to the past. Distrust can breed contempt. Change may present reasons for conflict. Passionate proclamations may trigger memories of past confusion. An unintentional action may produce a, unsettling response. Every possible feeling or response can be uncovered or seen in such a transition.

Regardless of the pasts that are presented, one thought remains at the forefront. Change has arrived. The church now has a new pastor. The church has a new perspective. Now is the moment to examine what it will take to move forward. Three major elements will be highlighted as needs that must be addressed—Biblical preaching, sound teaching, and effective communication.

These three areas of church life serve as broken areas that have crippled many members of the congregation—past and present. The lifeblood of any congregational context is grounded in their belief in the power and authority of the Word of God. It provides the blueprint for how to impact the community; strengthen the believers; and present hope for the lost.

The goal for this project will be three-fold. One, this journey will uncover the ineffective nature of the three identified areas. Each aspect of deficiency must be examined in order to discover how the congregation arrived at this particular point of

challenge. Why did preaching, teaching, and communication suffer? How did these three elements that are the lifeblood of any congregation become points of contention and strife.

Two, this examination will provide what experiences pastor and people bring to the healing process of the ministry at Pleasant Grove. The stories and history of each party provides a backdrop for sensitivity toward pain experienced. It presents an opportunity to find common ground to breed empathy for one another.

Three, these thoughts will reveal the beginnings of a road map toward healing. Some basic steps must be taken in order to experience a level restoration and growth. The revelations that arise from honest assessment will go a long way toward a plan of action. Eventually, crafting methods to address the needs of the church will be necessary.

Sound Preaching

The Pleasant Grove congregation has been in existence for over 100 years. Several pastors have taking their place to lead the congregation through building projects, membership growth, and personal spiritual examination. Leaders have come and gone. Pastors have made their marks on the tapestry of Pleasant Grove.

For the past fifteen years, members of the congregation have suffered from a lack of preaching that reflected any level of preparation, education, or biblical doctrine. Many people have expressed that the preaching moment was opportunity to hear about the factual pain of others in the congregation, rather than the message of uplift necessary to heal the wounds. Preaching in the Pleasant Grove Church became more about the personality of the preaching than the development of the believers.

Unfortunately, individuals began leaving Pleasant Grove because their spiritual needs was not being satisfied sufficiently. Some members revealed that the previous pastor lied about his educational background. The presentation of the message was more of an exercise in poetry and histrionics. The substance was sought after. However, most members declare that it was not experienced.

During the call process for a new pastor, it was of paramount importance that the next pastor possessed a command of the Scriptures. Nobody desired repeat the same type of preaching experience. They wanted to have the authentic experience with God through the scripture.

Biblical Teaching

Tbe teaching component for the church was lacking. The pastor is considered to be the primary teacher of the congregation. The education of the people was not genuine concern. Equipping the membership was reserved for a select few. The associate ministers were encouraged to embrace further training through conferences and other learning experiences.

However, the learning opportunities within the church were seen as secondary. The church had two Bible study sessions on Wednesdays. The premise was convenience for different cross sections of the congregation. However, the substance for those learning opportunities was never focused on foundational concepts that could help the spiritual wellbeing of the people.

Leadership has constantly suggested that they lack certain understanding about their role in the life of the church. Deacons have declared that they are limited in their

understanding of the vision for the church. Teachers in the Christian Education ministry feel that no training was ever specifically given to them. Education in the church was more of an afterthought than a priority.

In the transitional period between pastors, the Christian Education ministry identified several needs of the membership. They have attempted to meet those spiritual needs through various specialty classes and seminars. Each of these classes attempted to reach membership of various age, life experience, and spiritual understanding.

Effective Communication

The communication between pastor and people has been fractured for some time. The staff and leadership of Pleasant Grove had grown accustomed to mixed messages and random changes. Many times, the previous pastor would present ideas or concepts to be carried out for worship, ministry development, or administrative flow. All individuals who worked closely with the pastor demonstrated willingness to carry out anything that would assist in the growth and development of the church.

However, the pastor would take the opportunity to arbitrarily change his mind without consultation or warning. The people believe in following the leadership of a pastor. Pleasant Grove believes in supporting the pastor and the vision that has been given. However, they desire to have an understanding of the direction the church will take.

The greater confusion would take place in leadership meetings. When assessing every ministry within the church, one will discover over fifty individuals serving in some role in leadership. Every leader ought to have some level of input on the decisions

happening around them. However, leadership meetings were limited to the presidents of each ministry. The expectation was that each ministry lead would dispense information to the other leaders.

Unfortunately, the message was so unclear that every leader had a different perspective on the vision and purpose of the church. The confusion led many people to resign from office roles, leadership positions, and church membership. Many key people left with their families because they could no longer stand the dysfunction that took place with membership and pastoral leadership.

The Role of the Pastor Today

After several years of the same problems, Pleasant Grove took over a year to pray and discern the next move to be made for the church. They chose a new pastor they believed would lead them according to the biblical principle necessary to grow and develop the congregation.

As mentioned before, the new pastor has many challenges to face. He comes into a situation that is unfamiliar. The pain of his previous appointment confronts him. The transition is not easy. Nevertheless, the opportunity to empower and equip people for service is the focus. What lessons or experiences would be beneficial to inform this leader about how to approach this new assignment?

First, every congregation is different. Any new leader reflects on previous experience. If the last group of people were mean and nasty, this new congregation may be the same way. The pastor may be extremely careful in opening up to a new group of people.

The reality is that every congregation has a culture that dictates the approach to the pastor. Smaller, family size churches have a tendency to look at the pastor, as an outsider who facilitates the basic spiritual needs of the congregation. Many larger congregations look at the pastor, as a leader and visionary. Regardless of culture, the new pastor must offer the people an opportunity to learn one another.

Second, this transition is a new beginning. The joining of pastor and people provides a moment to acknowledge a new moment. Everyone has the opportunity to come to a new vision with fresh eyes. The pastor must cast a new vision of what the people of God can be.

At the same time, the vision must provide tools necessary to begin experiencing healing from the past, hope for the present, and equipping for the future. The pastor serves as the catalyst to provide opportunities for personal evaluation, growth, and development. If the congregation is going to grow—spiritually, emotionally, and numerically—the people must feel safe to experience the presence and power of God in a new way.

Third, love must be the motivation. Everyone wants to experience genuine love. Pastor and people want to know that their needs are being met. They want to know that everything that is done is with the best intentions in mind. The journey of the pastor could be difficult if the people are not willing to embrace and care about his needs.

At the same time, the congregation may find reasons to resent new leadership if the love of God is not practiced. Love is the one gift that has not always been felt by pastor or people. The shame of it is that both sides know how to give love away, but both

have not been positioned to receive it. Love is a necessary component to propel the church into a new dimension of ministry.

Next Steps

Pleasant Grove has been blessed with a strong reputation in the community. The congregation has been able to grow in the midst of trying time. Now, the church has a pastor who is prepared—spiritually and educationally. Each side is ready to embrace a new day in ministry. So where do pastor and people go from this point?

The needs that have been identified in this journey address the functions of teaching, preaching, and communication. Each portion has experience a lack of substance at some point. The following steps will serve as possible methods or ideas that can help to change the current paradigm for the congregation going forward.

The pastor is currently pursuing a doctoral degree. His emphasis is on education and preparedness. The congregation has a desire to become a church known for sound preaching and teaching. They want to be a center in Springfield that help others gain a greater understanding of the Bible.

The first step is creating continuity between the sermon and the vision. The vision gives the church the direction. It takes time for a congregation to embrace and understand a new direction. The vision will inform the pastor on what to teach and preach in order to heighten the awareness of the people.

The continuity of the message and the vision is created when the message is taught beyond Sunday morning. The sermon will serve as the initial contact with the vision. The same sermon will become the launch pad for deeper study during Bible study.

The second step is communicating the vision with leadership. The leadership needs training and understanding regarding the direction of the church. That understanding is developed through relationship with the pastor and time. The vehicles that can accomplish this goal are set time for fellowship and study with the various tiers of leadership.

Deacons, associate ministers, teachers, and other ministry leaders would have specific time to assess the various aspects of the vision. During those moments, leadership would examine how each ministry will project the vision. The fellowship time will permit an opportunity for the leaders and pastor to get to know one another and forge a stronger relationship in service.

When pastor and people are on one accord, the possibilities are endless. God desire that the believers would work in order to advance the Gospel message to the hurting and broken. It is not always simple attempting to follow the will of God in trying times. It is not easy to pursue the greatness that God provides.

However, time and dedication to purpose God presents for the church and pastor will ultimately birth a new view of what the people of God can be. The wholeness, healing, and change, that God wants for the people, can be facilitated through a passionate and sincere approach to the will of God.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Many people view the Bible is a guide to spiritual and ethical enlightenment. The pages are full of many stories and accounts that are constantly argued to be myths or historical fact. It serves as the bedrock of faith for believers around the world. Ultimately, it serves as a starting point for addressing the issues and challenges of the Christian church.

The Christian faith community has taken time to examine many issues from the perspective of many other disciplines and constructs for ages. Nevertheless, the church must be able to see strengths and weaknesses through the lens of its foundation.

Many problems can be found in every church context. Every Christian faith community is presented with difficulty. All problems are not equal. All issues are not handled the same. Unfortunately, some of the issues are never properly investigated with a Biblical understanding first.

The Bible is presented in this work as a compass to give direction toward identifying the challenges in the context of church life. The hope is that the biblical text will accomplish three goals. One, the text will pull out the themes that are most important to the future work is this project. Two, it will give insight into the challenges of the church context that will be investigated over time. Three, the text will offer initial thoughts on what to look for as project implementation takes place.

The biblical foundation that will be offered will come through investigating Old and New Testament scripture. This chapter will address accounts from Jeremiah 23:1-8 and Acts 3:1-10. The Jeremiah text will highlight the prophetic nature of addressing bad leadership. Throughout the text, one will discover three major elements at work. One, Judah was in need of a righteous leader. Two, Judah would be scattered as the result of Godless focus. Three, the hope of the nation rested in a different outlook on the future.

As the story unfolds, this work will take time to examine the conflict between the prophet and the government, the proper understanding of a shepherd, and the power of prophetic speech. The scripture and research will also demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the prophet. Prophets are primarily seen through the lens the spiritual alone. What happens when the prophet established by God has more to offer than just a willing ear and voice.

The Acts account will present the miracle encounter with Peter and the lame man at the Beautiful Gate. The story will highlight the power of healing works and discerning leadership through Peter the disciple. The assessment provided and examination what the healing of the lame man represented for ministry and the people who were amazed. It will also highlight the separation that exists within a faith community at any given time.

The lame man in this particular story can take on many representations for various church communities. He represents many people who are not apart of a faith movement at the moment. The more perplexing thought or question might be the following: how does the physical change in his condition alter the spiritual nature of those in the temple?

Each text will present major themes that will be guideposts in uncovering the needs of the current context for the overall project. Those themes will bring provide

possible ideas on how to approach change and improvement in the faith community. This journey will provide the insight necessary to begin examining the various concepts that will aid in building the research project framework.

Jeremiah 23:1-8

Jeremiah was a prophet with an interesting background. He provides for readers a picture of a man who did not himself as a qualified or worthy vessel. Jeremiah was like many people called by God to perform challenging tasks. He examined himself and did not see a well-spoken, qualified individual.

In the beginning of his account, Jeremiah documents about his youth and shortcomings. Reading the first chapter would suggest that Jeremiah believed his age or experience would not permit him credibility to be used. However, examining the life of Jeremiah would present the argument that he was the best option to get the message of Yahweh across.

Jeremiah experienced the prophetic call on his life during the time of Josiah as king of Judah. Many people debate whether his call came when he was a child or an adult. The general thought is that Jeremiah was called to prophesy during the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah.[1] This explanation can give insight into the lack of interaction with Josiah during his prophetic call.[2]

The reign of Josiah provided many changes. Specifically, Josiah renewed the ancient practices of temple worship as God intended. It appears that Josiah was

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[1] Steven L. McKenzie, and John Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth & Content* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 251.

[2] McKenzie, and Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background*, 255.

committed to leading the people of God back toward sincere worship and government reforms. The argument among scholars was if the reforms and political movement was to reunite the entire kingdom of Israel as in the days of David. Bible is does not present definite evidence of this idea.[3]

When Josiah died, Judah faced a dynamic shift in leadership and national composition. During this power struggle, two entities rose to promenence to rule and overtake Judah—Egypt and Babylon.

Jehoiakim was the king of Judah during Egyptian occupation. According to researchers, Jehoiakim was placed on the throne as no more than a figurehead and puppet king. Though he had royal blood as the son of Josiah, Jehoiakim committed his time and effort to advancing the will of Pharaoh Neco.[4]

During this reign, Jeremiah is seen to be a deep supporter of the changes that Josiah originally brought to the kingdom of Judah. Jeremiah was place by God to address more than the moral standing of the nation. Jeremiah was not only to be an oracle of the spiritual nature of the people, but he would have the ability to speak to the governmental construct of Judah also.

Throughout his ministry depicted in the book, Jeremiah spoke to various issues. He addressed methods of worship, covenants, the elitists, and the future Davidic dynasty.[5] The message through Jeremiah was valid beyond the empowerment of God.

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[3] J. Maxwell Miller, and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 459.

[4] Miller, and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* Miller, 462.

[5] Louis Stulman and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, *You Are My People: An Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 99.

Jeremiah was connected to many people in the government and religious ranks.[6] The message that he spoke would be controversial.

In the twenty-third chapter of this prophetic book, Jeremiah addresses the condition of national leadership. The language suggests that those who were in position as king have abused, scattered, and driven away the people of Judah. In the text, Jeremiah is apparently giving a word of hope that God would change the circumstances of the people and revive them to the days of David once again.

Within the text, one will see different elements of prophetic speech come forth. First, the prophet uses hopeful language that would appear to speak to the hearts of the people. Second, Jeremiah speaks briefly to the corrupt and selfish nature of leadership. Third, Jeremiah brings forth the idea of a king who would once again rule like David—*a righteous branch.*[7]

Given his bias toward more righteous reforms, it may have been possible that Jeremiah spoke from a place of conviction as well as utterance. Jeremiah saw that the idea of competent, caring shepherds were not being present among the people. The lack of thoughtful leadership was not being displayed to the people of Judah.

The word *shepherd* is one that has been used many times as a construct to describe pastors.[8] It is usually understood as the prevailing idea that people look toward when placing their trust in a spiritual leader. In many contexts, the imagery that is used in the life of the church is sheep being guided by a shepherd.

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[6] Miller, and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 463.

[7] *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 441.

[8] Strong, James. *The New Strong's Concise Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 2000), 133.

The interesting find is that the idea of a shepherd was not one just limited to the thought of a person in the countryside, but it was an attributed quality to kings and heads of state. Near Eastern cultures used the term shepherd to present the image of a benevolent, caring leader.[9]

Jehoiakim was the king of Judah. He had every right to be on the throne because of his father. However, the commitment to serving God, fulfilling past commitments, and maintain the legacy of his people did not matter much. Jehoiakim was loyal to Egypt. He convinced the people to be loyal to Egypt. He was willing to yield to a nation who enslaved them in the past and desired to gain as much wealth from them as possible.[10]

During the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah was found preaching and speaking against many of the decisions that the king made on behalf of the Egyptian rule. Jeremiah addressed the spiritual and social needs of the people. Though he never encountered Josiah, Jeremiah was affected deeply by the nature of the reforms Josiah instituted.

For this reason, the prophetic speech of Jeremiah could have cut two ways. One, Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah. The opportunity existed for Jeremiah to influence Jehoiakim through his spirit and conscious. Jeremiah preached about repentance and change in worship. He also spoke of living by the law as God intended before tragedy took place.[11] The likelihood that Jehoiakim knew the thoughts and actions of his father was strong. However, he did not follow through.

Two, Jeremiah spoke out against the handling of leadership within the nation. Jeremiah did not agree with who was control in the state of Judah. He spoke for many

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[9] *New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary*, 441.

[10] Miller, and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 462.

[11] Miller, and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 463.

people who believed that Babylon provided the better option regarding how the government would be run. Though the nation would still be under the control of another empire, Babylon appeared to give the option to maintain some sense of pride.[12]

Judah was in a leadership deficit. They did not have anyone who kept their interests and needs at the forefront. Kings were placed on the throne and taken off at any given time. Babylon eventually reclaimed control of Judah. Zedekiah was set to be the king of Judah for ten years. This vassal reign would produce corruption that would change the course of Judah for years to come.[13]

Themes

Throughout the text, three themes are continuously highlighted—poor leadership, prophetic speech, and righteous leadership. Each of these elements contributes to the nature of Judah in this particular scope of history. Each idea gives insight into how far a people can go away from the guidance of God.

Leadership is a major component to the success or failure of a government. A general understanding of the Israelite people brings to mind a once God focused government. The challenge of the evolving nation was the frail nature of the leadership.

At some point, each king had some major flaw. Each leader attempted to stand apart from others. Some kings wanted to maintain worship and focus on God. Others desired to take from the people and serve other entities. Why would these ideas of faulty leadership ever be tolerated?

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[12] Miller, and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah,* 462-463.

[13] McKenzie, and Kaltner, *The Old Testament: Its Background* McKenzie, 251.

The term shepherd that has been used in the text and this work presents more insight into why poor leadership should not have been tolerated. As it has been previously mentioned, the regional culture holds in high regard the shepherd model as the presentation of leadership. It was seen as utterly impossible for a king to not demonstrate caring qualities for his for his subjects. The thought of creating chaos, scattering the people, and destroying the nation was not an act of care, loyalty, or strength.[14]

The nations looked to their leaders for guidance, advancement, and protection. All the kings of the surrounding nations may have carried out the general ideas of shepherding according to their particular codes of ethics and beliefs. However, Judah was substituting their faith and devotion to God for alliances and dependence on others.

If leadership were to resemble a shepherd, the king of Judah would have been expected to carry out leading the people by administrative means and spiritual example. The one of the complaints of Jeremiah was the lack of focus on worship. God was not the center of the livelihood of Judah.

The reforms that Josiah began gave indication that Judah was to refocus their attention on worshipping God through genuine encounter not religious exercise alone. Jehoiakim should have been the one to continue those ideas that were established. He could have continued the example of his father. The continuity of righteous practice could have been maintained for the benefit of the people.

When poor leadership exists, the prophetic word becomes extremely important to the nation. Jeremiah becomes the voice to disrupt the status quo behavior of poor leadership. Jeremiah is the prophetic vessel that must speak for the voiceless, disenfranchised, and maligned.

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[14] *New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary*, 441.

The prophetic word is a key portion to the recovery and rebuilding of the people. In the words of the prophet, the people can find hope, direction, and change. The people were in a state of disarray. Jeremiah was keenly equipped to speak to the masses about the injustice flowing through governmental policies, the disjointed nature of kingdom wide worship, and the displeasure of God.

The prophetic word should not be understood to be a kind, gentle word. The prophetic word in this scripture and the book intentionally calls the leadership selfish. Prophetic speech is necessary in this case to expose the deficiencies in order to identify the solution or the hope for change.

When Jeremiah mentions a righteous branch to come through the line of David, readers can assume many ideas. One might venture in the conventional vein of seeing the coming of Jesus in the future. However, the messianic overtone gives the implication of a need for a solution in the moment.

For all of his character flaws, David is still seen as a king with a great commitment to worshipping God first. David was a king that perpetuated the ideas of a God centered government. Others from his family line followed suit.

The prophetic message addresses hope and change. Jeremiah speaks to the heart of the problem by extending hope. In this particular instance, the tone of hope is not one with immediate expectation of change. However, it provides the desire for a genuine shepherd and for a renewed understanding of deliverance. Verse eight suggests that the song of the people when change comes will shift from the days of crossing the Red Sea to recovery from exile and foreign occupation.

Application in Context

Within the ministry context, the themes mentioned from the Jeremiah text apply. As a congregation attempts to recover from leadership not grounded in God, the general thought is how to become whole again. Many people with in the congregation have spoken about the desire to have pride and respect once again.

The people have assessed their current landscape and realized the damaged that has been left from the previous leadership. The culture of the church projects an atmosphere of uncertainty. Many people are not as trusting of a pastor as they desire. The treatment of the past makes it very difficult to embrace change quickly.

All of the people recognize that the leadership was not focused on addressing the needs of the people. The undershepherd was focused on obtaining more financial gain and possessions than reaching the hearts, minds, and souls of the parishioner. The congregation has lamented about the lack of preparation in the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel message.

Different associate ministers, teachers, and other ministry leaders have discussed what appeared to be moral bankruptcy in the actions of the previous pastor. The people were more than willing to follow the pastor as long as it edified the whole congregation. However, the moment came that they realized that the direction of the church was moving toward a selfish focus.

Much like Judah, a congregation depends on its leader to guide it through difficult circumstances, spiritual enlightenment, and growth. Nobody expects or desires someone who is to represent God to address and lobby for his or her own interests. A shepherd is charged with guiding and protecting sheep.

However, the context feels stripped by someone who did not place its interests first. The people recognize that shepherding was not at work in their midst. The leader was not concerned about the well being of the people. The actions demonstrated a lack of care for the growth and development of the people. At this time, many people have lost a sense of confidence in their spiritual foundation.

The immediate need of the believers is a word to propel them beyond the past hurt and pain. The word cannot avoid addressing the difference in leadership. At the same time, the hope that may be presented can be alarming to those who have never witnessed anything else close to it. The prophetic word in the context of this 21st century church becomes more important than ever.

The prophetic word is not about foresight alone. Many people have the idea that being prophetic strictly means to have insight into some future event or glorified fortune telling. The reality is that prophetic speech provokes the status quo behavior of the unjust. It energizes the maligned to reassess their current condition. The prophetic also brings to light the lack of focus on the will of God.

The prophetic utterance provides an outlook on current circumstances. Most people cannot see how much trouble surrounds them when it is the status quo. In many cases, people become so accustomed to a certain lifestyle, operating method, or worship mode that anything looks evil or detrimental. Misguided leadership has the time and energy to establish an environment that is conducive to his or her ideas.

The lack of a Godly voice permits the will of the leadership to be established among those who want to be lead and submit to the will of the shepherd. Many faith communities are destroyed or seriously injured by such thinking. Respect for a pastor

turns into idol worship. The concepts and lessons of the Bible are taken as arbitrary thoughts and ethical ideas.

If environmental changes are to be made in a faith community, it must begin with a genuine encounter with a transformational message. That message must resonate with the masses. That message must flow through a willing vessel.

The congregation is looking for someone to lead them in a genuine understanding of the Bible that energizes worship, increases study, and enhances faith. The search for a righteous branch is necessary. Embracing and receiving a leader that focuses on God does not mean that he or she does not have flaws. It means that this individual is committed to doing all that is necessary to keep God is the center of the faith community.

Leadership in this church context must have some level of prophetic speech in changing the culture of the faith community. Whatever has been the negative experience of the people must be counteracted by a message that will not entertain separation from God, abuse of the disenfranchised, and hopelessness in the community. The prophetic shepherd is the type of leader that may fit this community.

The prophetic message of that type of transformative leader must include hope for the future. Hope must not be seen as a happy ending type of theory. At certain moments, hope can be seen as relief from the past, visioning for the future, or the possibility for adjustment in the present. Hope demonstrates the chance to rewrite the current narrative with a message and statement for tomorrow.

Jeremiah provided a framework for people of faith to understand hope. He spoke of what the nation needed. After the needs were expressed, he spoke of the results of

change. The result of change was the writing of a new song of deliverance. In a similar manner, hope provides a process to arriving at a new narrative.

The congregation has experienced negative results from selfish leadership. It is in need of a new outlook. Hope teaches that better leadership is always possible. Hope gives insight into how a Godly leader looks and sounds. Embedded in the prophetic message is the hope for what God deems to be acceptable leadership and guidance.

The idea of a king similar to David gave Judah recall to the glory days of the kingdom. The people could remember how the government operated. The people could recall the focus on worship. The people could conceive the idea of worship as a centerpiece in the national conscious. The people could visualize something greater than the problems of that moment. Anything was probably better than what they were receiving.

Nevertheless, hope presents the challenge of not knowing if immediate satisfaction will come. Prophetic utterance gives certainty and finality to an event that will take place. Hope permeates the thought, but finality presents no set date for change. Ultimately, the people would wait for one to come to execute a change in the perspective of being a shepherd to the people.

The faith community faces many challenges to recover and restore the atmosphere for change, hope, and dynamic witness. However, it must address the possibility that Godly leadership may be some time away. Hope only becomes a supplement in the midst of transition.

Is the Shepherd Complete?

A shepherd is defined as a benevolent, caring leader of a people. Within the biblical context, a shepherd must place the needs and desires of the people above his or her own. At the same time, the people must be effectively led toward a destination where they can prosper.

The first scripture suggests that leadership that is not focused on sustaining the growth, prosperity, and well being of the people will cause judgment to come upon the whole community. A leader must possess more than personal ambition to achieve success. The question is the following: What more does a leader need to be effective and caring?

Is it enough for a leader to say that he or she was aware of the circumstances around them? Is it acceptable for a pastor to look at the pain of the people and not attempt to address it? Is it possible to become so numb to what might be routine behavior or destructive condition that it is passed over as a problem for another entity?

When considering these thoughts, the thought becomes that a pastoral leader must have more a prophetic edge. A transformative leader must possess tools that are uncommon to the context he or she is called to serve. Character, integrity, spiritual, and ethical—these characteristics are paramount in changing the condition of a wounded church. However, a shepherd must have the ability to discern the deeper issues of the parishioner and willingness to offer something greater than personality—healing.

Acts 3:1-10

In the Acts account, readers are presented with the infancy of a new movement. Jesus has ascended into Heaven leaving the disciples to the groundwork of spreading the Gospel. They were charged with waiting on the Holy Spirit and power to come so they might be effective in spread the message of Jesus to every person they would see.

The third chapter opens with Peter and John going to the temple. At the gate, a crippled beggar was asking for money. This beggar was in the same place daily. People would bring him to this gate every day. It could be inferred that this crippled man was knew that the temple would have a great deal of traffic to possible receive money.

Readers might he able to consider that he desired to be in the temple with others, but his condition would not permit it. From previous accounts of those who were physically limited, it is very likely that people did not want to associate with him because of his condition. The beggar possessed physical imperfection that would not allow him to worship with others in the temple.

Peter and John were coming to the temple and saw this man. This crippled man begged for money. However, Peter told him that he only had the name of Jesus. Peter commands the beggar to stand up and walk. After Peter gave the command, the beggar was helped to his feet and began to walk for the first time in his life. When the healing took place, the beggar began to praise God.

The story appears to be very straightforward. However, the account has many layers that must be examined. When reading the story, one will discover a few concepts that intersect. One, Peter is the disciple being used to perform this miracle. Two, the beggar is brought to the same place every day to address his financial problem and not his

real condition. Three, the law separated this man from exercising his faith among the people. Finally, the response of the beggar after his healing triggers a response from those inside the gate.

Peter was an individual with many interesting characteristics. He was the first disciple to recognize the divinity of Christ before Jesus died. Peter was always the first to speak. Peter was given access to great revelation through experience and speech. He watched many miracles. He saw Jesus transfigure himself. He witnessed healings. Peter knew the power and authority of Jesus intimately.

However, Peter is known for great public failures as well. In the most intense moments, Peter buckled under the pressure. When Jesus was arrested, Peter cut off the ear of a soldier. When people identified him as a disciple of Jesus, Peter cursed the people and denied his teacher. Peter was bipolar at moments. He was extremely faithful or cowardly depending on the circumstances.

After the resurrection, Jesus showed faith in the ability of Peter to give him a task—feed his sheep. Peter arose from the humiliation of his past failures to being a willing vessel for the continuing work of the Kingdom of God.

Endowed with the Holy Spirit and power, Peter and the other disciples began to preach and demonstrate the power of God through speaking in other languages and miracles. During the festival of Pentecost, this very radical and unique movement amazed people. Individuals were compelled to change their view of their faith. Many people began to follow the teaching and doctrine of Jesus.

Peter was an instrument of God to communicate and demonstrate the love of God to all he encountered. When he encountered this lame man, Peter saw at least two issues.

The man was financially challenged. The man was physically challenged. Which of these conditions had the greater need?

The beggar was in an unusual position. It was common for those who were physically challenged to beg for money to make it from day to day. However, some of the thinking of various philosophers and thinkers suggest that this man had deep character and spiritual flaws. The deficiencies of this particular individual would be measured by his physical deficit.

Mikeal C. Parsons makes the suggestion that the author Luke presents the idea of physiognomy in the stories that he presents for the reader. The method of physiognomy uses the physical attributes of an individual to understand the deeper mental, spiritual, or emotional issues of an individual. Based on this concept, the nature of being a healthy individual would indicate that one is emotionally and spiritually stable.[15]

The theory is that Luke used the concept in his writing to highlight the power of God to change circumstances. The physical condition of an individual was not a prerequisite for being in a context or a community. Highlighting the conditions of various characters gives the reader the opportunity to identify with many people who are deficient within the context of the Biblical account.

If the lens of physiognomy is used, the assumption of the beggar is that he is weak in character and spirit. This concept would lead to understanding some of the practice of the Jews in the Roman context. The beggar is easily exiled from the faith community for being incomplete and fractured. How could a group of people come to this conclusion?

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[15] Parsons, Mikeal C. "The character of the lame man in Acts 3-4." *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 2 (June 1, 2005): 295-312. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014), 303.

Consider for a moment that this lame man needed help. His physical condition limited his opportunities to be self-sufficient. Many people would assume that being self-sufficient is a significant sign of independence. This man lacked independent movement. He lacked the ability to control his destiny. He lacked the ability to change his circumstances in an instant.

The lame man depended upon people who were willing to help him. It was not clear if these individuals visited the temple every day. It was not clear that these individuals were devout Jews. However, one of the interesting portions of the text is that the worshippers had a limited interaction with the lame man.

This lame man was not brought into the temple for an encounter with God. Apparently, he did not gain enough money to live a better lifestyle. Nobody reached out to him in order to help change his circumstances. The view of the beggar was not only about his physical status, but he was seen as deficient spiritually also.

The spiritual component of this beggar would be in question strictly on his outward appearance. The limits were placed on him to stay outside of the faith community to practice his religion outside of others who appeared to be whole and full of strong character. Religion will only practiced by those who meet the physical criteria established by the thinkers and superficial.

The beggar was at a disadvantage spiritually, physically, and economically. When he arrives on the scene, Peter is given the opportunity by God to change the course of the life narrative the lame man has experienced. Peter acknowledged the man. Peter observed the needs of the man. Ultimately, Peter addressed the physical need through the movement and power of the Holy Spirit.

The miracle that took place accomplished two things. One, the man regained his independence. Two, the people that did not acknowledge him had to take notice of the change. The indication that change had occurred was expressed through the praise rendered unto God.

The beggar leaped for joy and celebrated many transitions. He would no longer be dependent upon others to supply his needs. He now had the ability to make a living. He could worship in the temple with others if he desired. His life permitted him to be productive in society once again.

This healing moment would also open the door to inquiry from those individuals who had never witnessed such a spectacle. A dynamic change in demeanor, physical ability, and spiritual exuberance caused the people to question what had occurred in this moment. This scene led to an opportunity to expound upon the power of God and the message of Jesus Christ.

Peter was not just in a position to heal this once lame beggar. Peter was positioned now to give a message that was not common to the temple visitors. He preached about the message of Christ and the demonstration of the Holy Spirit through signs and wonders. The people received the offer of a brand new experience that was not like conventional temple worship. They were able to experience the power of God beyond the limits given by human thought and deed.

Themes/ Application

Throughout the text, various themes are presented as necessary for observation: discernment, healing, teaching, and fellowship. Each of these elements presents a different view of leadership and contextual application.

Discernment is the ability to recognize the underlying elements of a situation. In the case of the lame man, Peter recognized that money was not the real issue. The beggar was lame. He could not walk. His lack of mobility hindered is opportunity to live and worship. The infirmity kept the beggar from participating among those who were physically well.

Peter addressed the man by telling him that money was not going to be the answer. As a matter of fact, money was not an option because Peter did not have any money with him. The idea of invoking the name of Jesus into the situation demonstrated great faith and trust that God would use Peter to give this lame man the power to recover.

Addressing the most prevalent issue in a moment may appear to be the easiest thought for any church leader, pastor, or volunteer. People arrive into the church context with many problems issues and concerns that are not explicitly spiritual. Many people do not connect physical hunger with a spiritual deficiency. Most people would not conclude that a sign of weak character is tattered clothes.

A leader must be able to recognize that the needs of the people—in the church or community—vary from person to person. The issues are not always about comprehension of the Gospel message. The problems might be deeper. One deep-rooted issue may represent a greater problem.

The challenge for the lame man was physical. The physical problem affected the spiritual, social, and economic sectors of his life. In the same way, a hungry individual is not going to listen to the message of Jesus Christ while listening to the sounds of hunger penetrating the stomach. It is difficult for an unemployed person to embrace the principle of tithing. It is extremely difficult for the abused man or woman to listen to the patriarchal language attributed to God.

For the reasons stated and possibly others, a leader must take the time to recognize the various layers that are presented in order to effectively minister to the hearts and souls entrusted to his or her care. It is important that a leader is aware of the needs of the people. The people desire to be understood. One must not attempt to project his or her desires or pursuits on a person at the risk of missing the opportunity for ministry.

Discernment is not just an awareness possessed by an individual, but it is a tool empowered by the Holy Spirit to guide a leader in the proper direction. Peter could have met the initial request of the beggar by giving him money. However, money would have only addressed the immediate sense of gratification. The lame man would have still been in the same cycle of living.

The Holy Spirit gave Peter the foresight to address the physical problem of this man by spiritual means. Evoking the name of Jesus was necessary to certify that Peter was not acting in his own authority. It was also necessary to demonstrate dependence on God to give Peter what was appropriate to address the problem before him.

In a context of individuals who lack understanding, a pastor/leader is challenged to not impose his or her will upon them. The moment is presented to discern the direction

that the church or faith community will go in order to fulfill the will of God. Many people are not looking for the opinion of the leader to guide this pursuit. However, people are looking for a leader to demonstrate the need for the Spirit of God to constantly be at work.

Peter did not develop power separate from God to aid in changing the circumstances of the beggar. However, Peter developed a relationship with God that permitted him access to the power necessary to change the condition of this man. The pastor is limited in how much he or she can do in the congregational context. The pastor possesses tools that are important to the development process of a congregation. Nevertheless, the power necessary to change circumstances is only found through Christ.

The scripture text primarily highlights the demonstration of healing. This manifestation of the power of God is seen strictly as a physical occurrence. Healing is not limited to the physical encounter. Healing occurs through many others avenues—social, emotional, spiritual, and mental.

The healing of this lame man was a physical demonstration. However, we must consider all of the other aspects that were addressed. This man was judged according to his outer condition. His economics were based on the hope that kindness would be shown toward him. His spiritual needs was not being meet because of the social division pertaining to engagement with physically challenged people. No doubt the mental anguish could be assumed because of all of the other aforementioned factors.

It is plausible that healing in this particular case was about giving this man wholeness to every part of his life. Healing was not a situation of addressing one

particular issue. However, addressing the physical shortcoming led to repairing the possible issues that were connected.

In the church context, many people are dealing a variety of problems that cripple different areas of development. Many parishioners are facing mental, spiritual, and emotional problems. In some instances, congregations are full of individuals who have been abused by leadership. Furthermore, some congregations create atmospheres that keep other hurting people away.

The challenge is presented to many about how to reach the hurting on the inside and outside of the faith community. The text suggests that for many people a healing process must happen before a faith community can be enhanced, changed, or restored. How does this action unfold?

People must find themselves in the proper position to receive from God. The beggar was at the same gate on a regular basis. It can be implied that he found that the traffic that constantly came through the temple presented a great opportunity for change to occnr in his life. His placement allowed him to encounter people of influence. The possibility of one person to reach and change his life was always present.

With proper placement, people must possess a sense of hope for change. Healing is the activity that brings about a change that is opposed to the cnrrent status quo of life. No one desires to live in a broken state. However, that type of life begins to be the norm when experienced daily. When healing comes, one believes that life has become new.

A person that experiences personal healing becomes the subject of conversation. Many people in the community at large are not always clear on what change might mean for a formerly broken individual. It may appear that the act is an isolated incident.

However, the praise that radiates from the moment becomes a sign for people to take notice.

The beggar began to leap for joy after his healing. A quiet response was not found in the aftermath of his deliverance. The people that were in the temple that saw him began to wonder about the occurrence. They considered it strange. Given the nature of the miracle, it was possible that it should not have been considered strange. However, the response may have brought a different view of change for the people.

In this moment, Peter was given the chance to teach those who did not believe in Christ about the power of Jesus and the salvation gift. It is possible that the people would not have listened to the message unless they saw something attached to the message of Christ. It may not be the same circumstances, but many people might have taken the approach that the disciple Thomas took after the resurrection of Jesus. Evidence was necessary to confirm the message.[16]

Many people come to church looking for some sign, message, or demonstration to convince them that God is greater than the norms of this life. Most individuals desire to know the power of the message. Something should be accompanying the message. Something should be validating the message of the Savior.

The work of change in the lives of the parishioners sends a message to anyone that is close to the faith community. God is doing a work. God has provided an atmosphere for change and growth. Leadership has been used to create safe space for development. The leader who is mindful that faithful, life-changing works do accompany the message will discover the opportunity to share what the Lord is attempting to reveal to the world.

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[16] Jn 20.

God performs powerful works through willing vessels. It is not to accomplish an ego boost for a leader. It is to demonstrate how God can fix, restore, and revive the human condition. The works are to be used as teaching tools. One cannot fix his or her life without intervention. One cannot experience a tangible sense of the presence of Christ without yield to His power.

Each one of these elements plays a role in the process of repairing a hurting, broken church body. Out of the process of healing, a congregation will eventually discover a new outlook on fellowship with one another.

Fellowship is experienced primarily with people of like thinking, experiences, and beliefs. Throughout the text, the people in the temple had fellowship with one another. All the people who watched this lame man daily at the gate had commonality—they were physically whole. Every person that entered the temple beyond the gate had a sense of fellowship. Those individuals were welcomed because they did not have physical limitations. The beggar did not have access to any of these opportunities.

Many people are not able to gain entry into various fellowships because they do not meet certain requirements set by the social order within each group. Many people want to experience a sense of fellowship. However, the superficial dictates the order of many fellowship experiences.

Within the church context, many people miss the opportunity to experience growth and healing because of the barriers that are created. Many of the barriers have nothing to do with the emotional, mental, or spiritual baggage. The barriers present room to separate individuals from possibly being approached by different issues that have not been dismissed from their lives.

Difficulty exists when people see others that look like the struggles and pain that they have endured throughout life. It might be a psychological approach that aids in avoiding or suppressing the pain of being crippled by circumstances at one point or another. If the broken are kept at away by some superficial method, the group does not have to address the issues any further.

The lame man was at the gate daily. It does not suggest that many people stop to say much to him. This man may have encountered some generous people, but some people may have written him off because of his appearance. The greater rub is that this man was on the outside of the worship space.

The experience of true fellowship will unleash healing and understanding among people. The way that healing and understanding will flow in a wounded congregation is sharing genuine experiences with one another. Sharing in a move of God will provide the opportunity for a different understanding of God.

The Leader: Vessel of Healing and Prophetic Speech

The two scriptures mentioned in this paper highlight many concepts that are beneficial and necessary for the growth and development of a congregation. From these particular texts, the two elements that are presented most are healing and prophetic speech.

In a church that has been wounded by leadership, people are looking for two things. One, the people desire to be healed from the pain inflicted over the years. Two, the message and dialogue must change in the environment of the congregation. The

narrative presented before the people has been ego driven. The story has been spiritual abuse. People are longing for freedom from oppression.

The key component to experiencing these tools at work rests in the pastor/leader. The task is very daunting. However, the pastor is the carrier of what is needed. The pastor is not the answer alone. The leader is called to be a willing vessel that the Spirit of God equips to empower the congregation.

When a congregation is attempting to live out the purpose and plan of God in a sincere manner, a pastor is needed to shine light on the deficiencies that are present and facilitate opportunities for people to experience the grace and power of God at work. The pastor must be connected to the Spirit of God to see how he or she can be most effective in ministering to the masses.

In order to accomplish the mandate for this type of congregational context, the pastor must have a heart for the people of God. The church must be able to reach others and provide a safe haven for the wounded to experience the power and glory of God. If an environment is not prepared for the hurting, the experience or encounter that is presented to others can ultimately become toxic.

The fellowship of believers is in dire need of unity and wholeness from the past. The people have a desire to fulfill the mission of the Kingdom of God. The people want to be a faith community that provides change and impact to the community at large. The church wants to be loved by leadership and give love to the hurting. At the same time, the church cannot begin to provide the atmosphere necessary while people are still broken and hurting.

A pastor is tasked with presenting to the people with a genuine experience with God. Peter told the beggar to look at him. In other words, he said pay attention to what I have to offer. The pastor cannot offer more than what he or she may possess. The pastor must be so full of the power of God that he or she is able to share with others deliverance from the trials and tribulations of the past.

In this context, the pastor is positioned to be the discerning prophet. The pastor is called to speak prophetically to the current status quo. The leader must discern the immediate needs in order to provide a methodology for experiencing a great sense of the presence of God. The pastor must set the atmosphere for healing to flow to each individual that longs for wholeness.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

History as a Reference Point

When attempting to decipher any issues within a faith community, history can serve as a tool for understanding the success, failure, pain, or joy of a context. Many people believe that repeat past mistakes is the result of not paying attention or heeding to the lessons produced by the past transgression. History can shine a light on the deficiencies that are present with in the church. History can reveal the strengths of a faith community.

People need history to inform them of all the possible elements that can challenge their future advancement. History makes individuals aware of trends and cycles that continue to permeate the fabric of life. Ultimately, history serves as teacher that educates all on the how prepare for all trends good or bad.

When addressing the needs of any local church context, one can learn many things from the background or history of a church. Simple statistics can give a certain level of insight into congregational life. If a church has had ten pastors in 120 years, it may serve as an indicator that the church is accustomed to a history of stability in pastoral leadership.

However, further examination could reveal that many of the pastors did not love the people. The same information could reveal that the people were constant combative

toward anyone that stood in the office of pastor. Regardless of how one interprets information that is presented before them, history permits people the opportunity to gain an understanding of a subject, case study, or community.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church has a history that is vast on many levels. In 2015, the church will celebrate 120 years of service to the Springfield, Illinois community. During that time, the church has had seventeen pastors. Some of the pastors were memorable. Others are not revered as much.

Reverend Lyman Hubbard served Pleasant Grove for thirty-four years until his death in 1968. According to the church members and family members that still live in Springfield, the current educational complex was a dream that Hubbard always possessed. The complex was not completed during his tenure. Eventually, the dreams of the past were realize through the leadership of another pastor.

The insight that was gained through the knowledge of the past prepared the church to attempt to add to the legacy and ministry of Pleasant Grove. The building now stands as a reminder of what Pastor Hubbard meant to the progression of the church. It also represents how important it is for a congregation to be attached to its personal history.

History gives us a road map that guides all people into a greater understanding of difficulties that may be present in a moment. Individuals are given the opportunity to raise questions about the current context through the lens of the past. Do the principles of leadership ever change? Did anyone ever experience congregational abuse? What does healing mean for this moment?

The past provides a filter to process all issues for investigation. The man or woman who wants to gain clarity on a subject will proceed through challenges multiple perspectives to gain a clear picture of age old problem with humanity. However, many people are constantly creating more work by attempting to fix the issues that presented without using possible reference points.

The past gives options for those who need an answer for the trials and challenges of today. History serves as an informant to these difficulties. Even though the Bible make the reference, it is very true that nothing new exists. Regardless of how anyone interprets the Ecclesiastical reference, the reality is that the basic elements and concepts have existed for a long time. The only thing that might be different is how an element is implemented into a context.

Many spiritual developments have been established in the life of Christendom because of reflection on past developments. Students of history can recall how Christianity was not about the masses coming together on a Sunday morning as is experienced today. Many people came together in homes or communities to share in doctrine, teaching, and other things that were common.

Today, church takes that first century model and create small group ministries. The intent of those ministries is to grow the local body through more intimate means. The model is great; however, the idea is not new. The packaging is different because of context, but the contents are from the 1st Century A.D.

History speaks to us in so many ways. The question is how does history speak to the Pleasant Grove context? In order to find the proper voice, a general theme must be established. The major point of contention with in the context is the relationship between

leadership and people. The wounding experienced in the immediate past has permeated throughout the congregation to the point of unspoken divisions, lack of trust, and varying view on encountering God in the established worship space. What does the past inform us about these challenges?

Leadership Challenges

The concept of leadership is vast beyond the limits of this work. Multiple facets exist in the understanding of what it means to be a leader. At the core, a leader is still a human being with the ability to fail according to moral codes, spiritual convictions, and the law. The perception is that a leader must always desire to walk in virtue and uphold character that is beyond reproach.

When reading Augustine, one will discover his convoluted manner by which he addresses virtue. The concept of virtue is understood as being either subject to the desires of humanity or it becomes the master of those desires. The challenge of the man or woman is to choose which direction will set the course for his or her future.[1]

All people would hope that leadership would have the best interest of the people in mind. However, this line of thinking can become a challenge. Many people are constantly addressing the challenges of their humanity. Many mistakes and challenges can arise that disrupt the ability to carry out effective service.

Martin Luther King, Jr. is known throughout the world as a great humanitarian, preacher, and leader of the Civil Rights movement in the United States. He reached so many people with the message of nonviolent action and equality. The world recognizes the power of his witness as an advocate for the powerless and underserved.

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[1] Augustine, *The City of God,* 670.

Could it be possible that Martin had a moment of doubt or fear during his time as a Civil Rights leader? Of course he had moments of difficulty. It is known that people in various cities attempted to kill him. Many more individuals conspired with local law enforcement to imprison him. Those general events are a matter of public record.

Given that all these possible attempts on the life of Dr. King were constantly present during his rise to prominence, many people may not consider that all the powerful moments of movement and change may not have occurred if he fulfilled his suicide attempts as a young man.[2] The world may not have been provided with the affirmation of possessing value in the eyes of the father if Martin decided to allow his beliefs about the afterlife to overtake his faith journey.[3]

The reality is that leaders have defining moment that can change the course of his or her experience. For King, the death of his grandmother during his youth was a powerful image that did not immediately leave him. One of his suicide attempts took place after he discovered his grandmother died while he was having, what Michael Eric Dyson called, *illicit fun.*[4]

The event sparked so many thoughts and ideas in the mind of young Martin that he did not want to live any more. The guilt was so heavy. The pain appeared to be too much to bear at one time. The attempted escape at a young age speaks to difficulty that comes with attempting to cope with tragedy and struggle. It also speaks to how easy it can be to eliminate promise in an instant.

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[2] Michael Eric Dyson, *Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Death and How It Changed America* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2008), 4.

[3] Dyson, *Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Death,* 5.

[4] Dyson, *Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Death,* 5.

Lost in the journey to understanding leadership or basic human interaction is the reality of how environment and experiences can influence the individual journey. Every moment can illuminate a reality that is not always pleasant. People can become exposed to condition that is contrary to the assumptions that one can make from time to time. Those moments can make individuals jaded about their beliefs.

During the 16th Century, Martin Luther was challenged to comprehend his place as a clergyman in the Catholic Church. He was a part of a culture that was fully engaged with corruption on many levels. The activities of the leaders in the church reflected a lack of care for the people and growth.

The papacy became a position that was easily bought. Pope Alexander VI made certain that he became pope. Bribery was the path to enthronement as the Pontiff. He was surrounded with illegitimacy from the election to the seven children.[5] Many of the priests were illiterate. The quality of church life was beneath any moral standard that anyone could conceive.[6]

Richard Marius suggests that many people who were literate did not enjoy their experience in Rome. They were always subject to an absent pope, uncomfortable weather, and constant reminders of corruption. Prostitution establishments were constantly frequented by clergy and homosexuality was practiced.[7]

Luther was a witness to the culture of the church. He witnessed firsthand the corruption and disrespect of the Church. This German priest was given the ability to visit

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[5] McGrath, Alister E. *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—a History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-first* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007), 22.

[6] McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 22-23.

[7] Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 80-81

Italy. As a pilgrim to experience the heart of Catholicism, Luther experienced so many issues that were contradictory to his understanding of the Bible.[8] He viewed all of the various sites in Rome. He looked at the refurbished Pantheon that once housed several different gods of the past, but it never housed any relic that reflected Christ in any manner.[9]

The idea of Rome was to be one that reflected holiness and strong faith.[10] The longer Luther dwelled in the midst of this corruption; it would appear that more he become disheartened with the condition of the church. This thinking might be reflected through the writings of the priest. "And now farewell, unhappy, hopeless, blasphemous Rome! The wrath of God has come upon you in the end, as you deserved, and not for the many prayers which are made on your behalf, but because you have chosen to grow more evil from day to day!"[11]

The cycle of corrupt church politics and engagement with the people and clergy could have contributed not only to the distain that brewed in Martin Luther, but he need to address the issues within the life of the Catholic church. The church was not representing the spiritual interest of the people. It was only appeared to feed the desires of those who wanted more tangible increase.

The church was in need of refocusing on the principles of scripture and community. The people we in need of leadership and guidance in understanding personal truth and faith. The challenges that were presented are the people were dependent upon

[8] Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death*, 81.

[9] Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death*, 82.

[10] Luther, *Three Treatises*, 21.

[11] Luther, *Three Treatises*, 4.

individuals that did not possess the moral compass to guide them into a deeper sense of relationship with God. The masses lacked the educational backing to understanding what was happening in worship. The priests were used to occupy the role. "Therefore, a priest in Christendom is nothing else but an officeholder. As long as he holds office he takes precedence; where he is deposed, he is a peasant or a townsman like anybody else."[12]

The reality for Luther was that people began to abuse their roles to the extent that the people were in need of a change in thought. It is suggested that Luther was not attempting to ever begin a new concept of Christianity. However, his work provides for the student the thought that he wanted the people to regain the opportunity to have a genuine encounter with God.

Luther deconstructs the idea of papal authority. He suggests that the Bible does not give license or claim to the pope as the sole source of interpreting Scripture.[13] He further asserts that the hierarchy of the church in relationship to the people is a hypocritical concept. "Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office."[14]

The words of Luther are revolutionary for an environment in desperate need of reform. The environment presented a breeding ground for the nature of a prophetic voice in the midst of this chaos. It was necessary for the people to know the claim that only the pope may interpret Scripture is an outrageous fancied fable.[15]

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[12] Luther, *Three Treatises,* 14.

[13] Luther, *Three Treatises,* 13.

[14] Luther, *Three Treatises,* 12.

[15] Luther, *Three Treatises*, 20.

Whether the Catholic Church during the Reformation or the fellowship in Springfield, the church stands in need of a different voice to propel it toward the depth of Biblical truth and understanding. Living on the cycle of disenfranchising the masses is one of the major problems that continue to persist.

The work of Luther provides imagery similar to the prophet Nathan. Though Luther was a part of the institution, his conscious was pricked by the apparent disregard for the things of God. Nathan was a prophet during the royal administration of David. His role was to speak the truth of God regardless of the outcome.

For some people, the tradition of the prophetic role was to make certain that information was given. However, Nathan and others took the time not only to state the obvious infractions, but call leaders and others to accountability also.[16] Luther took the time and effort to make certain that the people regain a sense of connection to Christ.

The experience of the German monk stands as a reminder that progress is achieved by wrestling with the current reality as seen through the scope of faith, history, and morality. People might be of the belief that witnessing the corrupt aspect of religion provided an unexpected opportunity for people to once again consider their perspectives on their faith.

The questions may arise during moments of transition. The faith community that experiences positive or negative changes must address the magnitude of how individuals will address their faith journeys. Who is Christ? What is salvation? What does sacrifice suggest to greater growth? Are all broken people welcome in this setting?

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[16] Norman Podhoretz, *The Prophets: Who They Were, What They Are* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2002), 77.

Forces at Work

Throughout history, many events have been shaped by the social, economic, and spiritual nature of a community. The nature of any community is rooted in the core values established by those who constantly dictate the culture. Religion, law, money, or all three govern many cultures.

A person who is seeking to find their space within that cultural dynamic must examine is they are pious enough to be accepted; legalistic enough to have influence; or economic equipped to control all that is happening around them. Most people are not found to have that type of influence at all.

When Israel was going through shifts in leadership, various kings began to place the temple and people in oppressive situations. In order to remain in their homeland and worship freely, the king would use money from the temple and treasure to pay tribute to foreign lands.[17] While this assumed perspective of freedom was maintained, the kings that assumed the throne were permitting bondage.

Interestingly enough, the temple was a viable source for income to continue the payoff process of foreign nations while it was to represent the center of spirituality for the nation of Israel. The temple was an enterprise that employed people from various walks of life in order maintain the upkeep. The idea of this model of administration could be attributed to the Mesopotamian approach.[18] The temple in Jerusalem represents more to

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[17] Theodore Mullen, "Crime and Punishment: The Sins of the King and the Despoliation of the Treasuries," *The Catholic Biblical* Quarterly 54, no 2, April 1992): 231-248, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

[18] Lisbeth S. Fried, "Temples, tithes, and taxes: the temple and the economic life of ancient Israel" *Interpretation* 61, no. 4 (October 1, 2007): 447-448, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

the community than just a place to practice religion. The temple was to primary space to understand God, economics, and politics.[19]

The blending of multiple concentrations in one institution could be a factor in how the people would view God and the stability of their faith. In like manner, the church is not only a religious center, but it also represents political ideologies and economic theories.

In the United States, the church has been a beacon for great movements. At the same time, the church has been a breeding ground for people to justify oppressive actively under the guise of Biblical inaccuracies and culturally influenced visuals of the Jesus. The culture and society has significantly influenced the manner by which people envision Christ and ultimately their relationship to Him.

During the early twentieth century, Warner Sallman painted the portrait know as Head of Christ.[20] The portrait has been seen and circulated many times to people. It was a popular image of Christ that many people—Black and White—carried with them or had displayed in their homes.

The image of Christ as a Caucasian male apparently did not bother many people initially. However, time would prove that this type of imagery could be useful in keeping people in the mindset of being less than. The loving and caring Christ would become an

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[19] Norman K. Gottwald, "Temples, tithes, and taxes: the temple and the economic life of ancient Israel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 127-128, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (Accessed December 2, 2014).

[20] Edward J. Blum, and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God & the Saga of Race in America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 12.

object of culturally driven myths. One particular myth was birthed from the production of this portrait. Christ was white.[21]

Before this portrait, the idea of Christ in the American landscape was primarily attached to the each individual experience. The Civil War became a theological battleground. The Confederate soldiers believed that Christ was on their side. They had no doubt that Christ would give them victory. However, defeat was their reward.[22]

Jesus has been used as a symbol of imperialism and dominance. The whole persona of Jesus has been used many times to promote ideologies that are diametrically opposed to the reading of scripture. Jesus has been politicized in order to project the idea that the United States is all about the nature of Christ.[23]

The reality is that Jesus was reduced to a role manipulated by people. Religion at its core is a valuable tool to the growth and development of a human being. It teaches faith, beliefs, bope, love, and kindness. Religion does not have color, race, or creed. However, history teaches that any way to control a group of people is beneficial only to those in control.

Rather than empower the downtrodden, the powerful continue to manipulate all those looking for guidance. Dr. King attempted to offer hope in the midst of the struggle for racial equality in the United States. At the time hc was receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, King declared he refused "to accept the idea that the 'isness' of man's present

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[21] Blum, and Harvey, *The Color of Christ,* 15.

[22] Blum, and Harvey, *The Color of Christ,* 15.

[23] Blum, and Harvey, *The Color of Christ,* 12.

nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'oughtness' that forever confronts him."[24]

Humanity was not designed to accept being devalued. People were not to be separated based upon superficial issues or social stigmas. The reality exists that barriers exist with the purpose of keeping people away from experiencing the totality of the power and presence of God. The opportunity to know God beyond imposed boundaries can prove dangerous to those individual attempts to maintain the status quo of life.

Religion becomes a tool of separation that attempts to keep people focused on their current situations and reject the prospect of better beyond the current moment. People attempt to thrive within the parameters of certain religious and social constructs. If a person does not dress like the rest of the congregation, they cannot be a part of the growth and development of the faith community. If a person cannot financial contribute to a cause, his or her worth can be measure by the lack of dollar and cents.

All major areas of life and study create rules and regulations that dictate the values and priorities of a group. Many churches and other religious organizations present to people how they value their goals, objectives, and mission. Usually it occurs through visual representations. Other methods could be how the people place emphasis on various beliefs and practices. Every methodology presents a message. However, that message can be misunderstood or used to the determent of others.

Sacred Space for Change

The temple was known as a sacred space. The building was necessary to fulfill spiritual transaction between God and humanity. However, it has been stated that the

[24] Washington, *I Have A Dream,* 110.

temple provided many uses. Regardless of the economic or political transactions that were carried out in the space, the temple was still revered as holy ground.

The temple had many rules and regulations that addressed the sacred nature of the space, the holiness of people, and the methods to keep the unclean away. The temple of God was to be a place that welcomed all who desired to encounter Yahweh. However, people were challenged to make sure they met the requirements to fulfill their religious task.

The nature of one being unclean is a challenge to the concept of God opens the door to all who may enter. Impurity was not just an issue of personal holiness. The idea of holiness was a portion of the national consciousness especially in Israel. Every major aspect of the identity of Israel was touched by the pursuit of holiness—law, priesthood, prophetic speech, and leadership.[25]

Purity in many ways appeared to be a strictly cosmetic or superficial idea. Ritual impurity always focused on the natural issues of the human condition. However, the moral issues of a person did not appear to be addressed in the worship space. Superficial piety then becomes the key to accessing the worship space. God could not see the people without their willingness to clean up and make a presentation.[26]

The seriousness of holiness was such that the ritually impure could not be in the same area as the pure. Those that did not meet the requirements were had places reserved

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[25] David Altshuler, "On the classification of Judaic laws in the Antiquities of Josephus and the Temple Scroll of Qumran," *AJS Review* 7, (January 1, 1983): 1-14. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

[26] Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple (Mark 11:15-18) : A Comparative Approach," *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 3 (September 1, 1997): 455-472. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

for them outside of the city.[27] The idea that people could not enter strictly because of personal hygiene or otherwise presents a faith that is only strengthened by the resolve of promoting human understanding and protocol.

One must consider for a moment that the ritual nature of religion may provide for many people an opportunity to experience through the tangible. A story is told about a Jewish man who wore his *tzitzit* when encountering a prostitute. As he was about to engage in sex with the woman, his *tzitzit* hit him in the face. Those knots served as a reminder of his dedication and need to follow the commandments. The woman was curious as to why he stopped. After he explained his commitment, she was so moved that she gave up the life of prostitution to learn of his ways. She ultimately became his wife.[28]

Practices are not always pointless. However, people must find meaning on some middle ground to how to best experience and exercise their faith. Only depending on being ritually clean does not provide the opportunity to be changed by the experience of God. In the same manner, having full spiritual insight with action does not provide a complete experience of God. What is the middle ground? Does a balance exist?

Because of superficial purity, many people would be found outside of the sacred space. The opportunity to work out the inner issues of the human condition automatically goes by the wayside. The personal pursuit of holiness becomes a process that begins from the outside back toward the soul.

When looking back at Jesus in the temple, his work was the attempt to reestablish the purpose and design for the worship space. The priests were to handle the nature of

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[27] Altshuler, "On the classification of Judaic laws."

[28] Scott Kosofsky, *The Book of Customs: A Complete Handbook for the Jewish Year* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 20-21.

purity in the temple. Jesus was not a priest. His role was not to police the issues of purity. However, Jesus performed this act in order to provide purpose toward the desires of God.[29] It could be inferred that the goal was to reposition the priorities of the temple and those who served. How does this speak to the church today?

At times, the church may have the priorities out of order. The people who need God the most are cast to the side because of a technicality in denominational polity. What is said to the single mother who comes with all her children? How is the interracial couple received in various church contexts?

When addressing sanctification for children, it appears to only be based on the spiritual condition of the parents. The concept is not new in scripture. To some degree, this idea persists the church today. The idea of the purity of a child being determined by parental understanding of God is a dangerous thought.

Many people are automatically disqualified from embracing the presence of God because one spouse may embrace the power of God. The other spouse may not embrace the faith tradition of the other. Though the unbeliever is theoretically sanctified because of the faith the believing spouse, the determination of the holiness of the next generation is based solely on one decision by one parent.[30]

This line of thinking could possibly produce a sense of entitlement regarding the relationship with God. The encounters that God would provide in sacred space are no longer based upon the genuine pursuit of presence and intimacy. It becomes breeding for

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[29] Betz, *Journal of Biblical Literature.*

[30] Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, "Jewish laws on illicit marriage, the defilement of offspring, and the holiness of the temple: a new halakic interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14," *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 711-744. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

disappointment. Someone will base his or her whole experience with God on one person rather than pursuit one unfiltered by the experiences of others.

So history prescribes that people must take the time to reflect on how to embrace and pursue the wholeness and genuine encounters with God. One must be able to find freedom in practice and worship without the bondage and restrictions of extremes. The rejection from sacred space may yield spiritual and emotional wounds. The necessity for the Spirit of God to work is important to the growth development of the believer.

The evidence of the Holy Spirit working in the life of the believer is not restricted in any way to human dictation. The Spirit of God is classified as working through various gifts and abilities. The experience of God must be produced through new revelation.[31] The worship space of the believer is not just the physical building (temple), but it is the soul.

Many worship areas are consecrated with the intent on presenting an open space for reflection and focus on the presence of God. The rituals that take place give insight into how humanity relates to the Creator.[32] In that spirit, people are looking for any way to reconnect and find healing and wholeness for their journey.

Healing is an important component of the experience with God. Whenever a person has been separated from the presence of God, he or she is seeking to have an area of the human experience fulfilled and restored. Separation or segregation can create wounds that last for significant time.

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[31] J. Lanier Burns, "Reemphasis on the purpose of the sign gifts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132, no. 527 (July 1, 1975): 242-249. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

[32] Betz, *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

The myth of strictly experiencing God in a physical worship space presents a limited scope to how far God can reach humanity. People are constantly seeking to have a genuine encounter with God. How is that encounter accomplished? It can be reflective. It can be tangible. It can be through fellowship.

Henry Mitchell reflected on a dire prognosis he received during his seminary days. He recalled when the president of his seminary came to visit him. He did not reflect on how much time the president spent with him. He reflected on the fellowship and prayer time. Mitchell thought about President Coffin prayed for him. "No matter how utterly weak and wasted I felt, his hand seemed to connect me to a strange and wonderful power, which coursed through my whole body as he prayed."[33]

The profound moment in the Mitchell reflection is how important the role of healing and fellowship played. Mitchell began remembered how he recovered from being near death. The two men never talked about what occurred. They gave glory to God for the change in health. The experience of the power of God was so real that change occurred in an instant.

Beyond the limits of the temple, people are able to experience the movement of the Spirit of God. Beyond the boundaries place by human limitations, people are positioned to experience change for the better. The negative qualities of leadership, corruption of human beings, or misunderstandings of Scripture can breed the opportunity for the prophetic voice to reset the focus of the people of God. No matter the circumstances or limitations, God always makes provision for the people to experience the change necessary.

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[33] David Haxton Carswell, ed. "Faith and Healing: A Personal Perspective by Henry Mitchell" *The Living Pulpit,* no. 2 Apr - Jun 1997:6.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Theological reflection is necessary in the understanding of the direction that God desires to lead a community of believers. Proper engagement with scripture and context will ultimately provide for leaders the basis for trials and tests in the life of a congregation. In many cases, individuals do not take the time to investigate the depth of being theologically sound in his or her engagement in leadership.

Theological reflection becomes an opportunity for any individual to investigate his or her relationship with God, commitment to the advancement of the local church, and necessity for growth and development in personal discipleship. Reflection will test is a person is functioning as a disciple of Christ or a martyr of his or her beliefs.[1]

Searching through various concepts of theological reflection provides for a leader the tools necessary to unpack the different circumstances that challenge any church setting. For many in the African American church tradition, the concept of Black liberation theology speaks to the core of being maligned in society. Yet, the Black church is able to identify with a Christ who suffered indignity and gain victory through the struggle.

[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchtone, 1995), 59.

Liberation theology is not an idea that is exclusive to the tangibly maligned alone.[2] It gives room for anyone to discover his or her identity through another lens. Others may identify with other forms of theology that speak to the nature charismatic movement, spiritual and emotional wounding, systematic understanding, and others. Nevertheless, we gather many important ideas and concepts by finding new methods of applying Biblical concepts to the cultures and contexts that we inhabit as the people of God.

The assigned context for this project has faced several challenges in leadership that should bring pause for consideration. First, the current leadership model has been rendered flawed. Secondly, the people desire to hear the necessary pastoral tone to move forward as a faith community. Finally, the congregation is attempting to still process past pain from previous leadership.

These themes are not unusual in the life of any church. Many churches face strife in leadership regularly. Unfortunately, people are the vessels that are used to reflect the presence and power of God in the Earth. As long as people are associated with organized structures, religious or otherwise, theologians, laypeople, and church leadership will always participate in a discourse about becoming better as community.

The viewpoint of leadership within the church community is an interesting concept. Many people may see church leadership strictly as an opportunity to serve. Biblically speaking, it is a significant way to exercise the gifts and abilities that God has given men and women to reflect the Kingdom of God.

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[2] Burton Z. Cooper and John S. McClure, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 3.

Leadership could be viewed as a chance to demonstrate how costly the grace of God truly is. The value of grace is more of a reason for leadership to truly exemplify the character of God. *Costly grace,* Bonhoeffer says, *is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world, and not thrown to dogs.*[3] Grace cannot be an attribute that is removed from the profile of leadership. In some cases, it is grace that drives a leader to do more for the advancement of a local church and the Body of Christ in a global sense.

However, leadership can assume a role of segregation between parishioners. Leadership roles can become badges of honor and prestige for individuals who never receive the opportunity to be acknowledged for his or her skills beyond the wall of the sanctuary.

Therefore, leadership loses the nature of being a willing servant that reflects the life and attitude of Christ. Serving others is no longer the goal of an individual who bears a title. The idea is to appear superficially superior while missing an opportunity to reach and empower others who need a tangible sense of the love of God. These types of divisions and misunderstandings may cause misguided perceptions of what leadership should reflect.

In the process, people who encounter this elevated view of leadership—devoid of a selfless attitude—can experience spiritual and emotional wounds. In some cases, people leave because the Gospel preached does not always match the actions demonstrated. Potential and long-standing parishioners may find themselves wrestling with the ability to trust those who have been given oversight of the various affairs of the local church.

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[3] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship,* 45.

Moments exist where people have been slighted through interactions with pastoral and church leadership. The value of the individual has been reduced because the parishioner believed that the pastor or church leader was fully capable of displaying care for his or her spiritual wellbeing.

The possibility also exists that a parishioner was deceived to believe that the pastor or church leader was fulfilling a role because God was the driving force. In some cases, the reality was that the leadership role was an opportunity to gain greater prestige rather than care for the growth and development of the believer.

Howard Thurman reminds us about the nature of deception. The idea *is* not academic, but profoundly ethical and spiritual, going to the very heart of all human relations.[4] Within the organization of the church, people are challenged constantly with revealing who they are with the hope of moving toward a reality of what God desires for them to become as people.

The deception that can exist in all forms of church leadership can cultivate a state of a lack of trust. The idea of trust can be sacrificed for many reasons. Trust may be the last thought on the mind of an individual attempting to preserve the idea of being pristine before people. It may he argued that a man who places so high a price upon physical existence and survival that he is willing to perjure his own soul has a false, or at least an inadequate sense of values.[5]

Any type of deception from leadership or laity can create an atmosphere for people not to be receptive of the Gospel that is preached or taught. It may even suggest to people that a pastor or others leaders do not believe in the power of the message. The idea

[4] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 62.

[5] Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited,* 62.

is suggested that being effective in the mode of preaching requires the vessel to be genuine. In other words, you cannot pretend to love the congregation[6] in order to be accepted in speech or otherwise.

The church membership can be aware to a degree about the intentions of a pastor or auxiliary leadership. People are searching for leadership that demonstrates absolute trust and faith in the principles of the Bible. Any type of conflict in actions and faith would represent a gross inconsistency between the message and the messenger.[7]

Therefore, it is wise for leaders to do a self-inventory about reflecting certain elements of God. Love must be at the core of any leader. Truth must be a governing force that aides the believer in growth and development; guides a pastor or church leader in making beneficial decisions; and draws every person to common ground in advancing the Kingdom of God. Forgiveness must be a necessary tool in overcoming the challenges of church hurt. All of these elements working together can provide steps restoration for the believer and leader.

Throughout the remainder of this discourse, three themes will be addressed—pastoral and church leadership, processing church hurt, and pastoral tone. Each idea serves a role in improving the livelihood of the local church. Also, the concepts must be scrutinized to see how this particular context arrived at the point of examination.

In many predominantly African American churches, the pastor is the primary leader, visionary, and driving force behind a ministry. In this studied context, the pastor

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[6] J. Philip Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Prophetic Preaching to a Broken World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 19.

[7] Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love,* 21.

has reached the place of being deified before the people. Even though it is important to respect the office of the pastor, unhealthy attitudes can develop regarding a person occupying this role.

The challenges that a pastor faces daily is maintain personal integrity while balancing the call of God on his or her life. Though the congregation has not accepted the idea of women in ministry due to prior teaching and cultural restrictions, the principle of integrity in ministry has no gender specificity.

Pastors can be revered because of their preaching and teaching gifts. Some pastors are extremely skilled administrators and counselors. Even more pastors are charismatic in their approach to addressing the people. However, those characteristics do not always match the nature of the man or woman.

People have entered into the ministry with intentions on fulfilling dreams of being grand and important. The nature of the people did not enter into the psyche of the person. Therefore, the pastor creates is afforded the chance to create an environment or kingdom to suit his or her needs. In the process, the people who look toward God through the pastor for hope suffer spiritual, emotionally, and financially.

All pastors are not this bold and uncaring. However, the temptation to become a professional and not a pastor is very possible. Leaving a legacy rooted in the personality of an individual can be very dangerous. The boundaries of pastor and people can move from spiritual equipper to savior.

In South Africa, a church focuses on the connections that are formed through prophetic encounters. The pastor of this particular fellowship has established that connection with God must come through his medium—the pastor. He was the source of

all that was necessary to guide the people through their troubles, trials, and tests.[8] It sounds like a cult.

When this pastor passed away, the statement was made by one of the members, I am not sure what I am going to do. Tata Xaba was not only my spiritual father, he always told me what to expect through his prophecy.[9] The parishioner had become so reliant on the presence and word of the pastor that she was totally lost. Furthermore, the creation of this type of dependency eliminates the room for others to step and speak in affirmation of her journey in this life.

This particular example of pastoral leadership illuminates the unyielding trust that a parishioner can give to a pastor. At the core a congregation must trust their pastor. The hope would be that the under-shepherd would not abuse the power that comes with serving in such a powerful role. People can abuse the authority associate with the role. One could live for the benefits that result from popularity or effectiveness demonstrated in the role of pastor.[10]

When the nature of the prophetic is used as a tool to control the environment or the people, a pastor becomes especially dangerous for the congregation. People who are maligned in various ways are looking for someone to provide hope in some manner. When the personality take over what God has established it easily exposes the tendencies of that figurehead. If love were not the key element in addressing the needs of the people,

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[8] Linda E. Thomas, "South African Independent Churches, Syncretism, and Black Theology," *Journal Of Religious Thought* 53, (January 1, 1997): 39-50, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

[9] Thomas, *The Journal of Religious Thought,* 41.

[10] Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love,* 25.

why would anyone willingly make a person completely dependent upon a fallible individual?[11]

The unfortunate reality is that pastors that take on the posture of monarchs in a private kingdom create an environment that many people are familiar. It requires the leader to become keenly aware that they have moved from the position of pastor/prophet to oppressor. The needs of the people are no longer paramount in the development of ministries or other empowering activities.

However, a pastor that actively tries to equip and encourage the believers for their benefit and growth can face the challenge of becomes everything by default. When activities are performed well, the pastor will get some credit. When the sermon is preached and it appeals to the ears of the people, the congregation renders vocal pleasure.

What happens when the message becomes a challenge and not a pleasing thought? What occurs when all things shift away from the established traditions of the local church? Suddenly, the expectations of the pastor become unreasonable. People begin to demonstrate feelings toward pastoral leadership that can be unfounded and contradictory to a life journey with God.

The preaching aspect of the call of a pastor presents a mental, emotional, and spiritual conflict on a regular basis. The challenge to speak the truth when it is not popular or favored by the people can lend itself to being blamed for anything possible. The messengers of Jesus will be hated to the end of time. They will be blamed for all the divisions that rend cities and homes.[12]

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[11] Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love,* 21-22.

[12] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship,* 215.

Yet, pastors are to be guided by the Holy Spirit to preach and teach the people of God. It is presupposed that the activity of the pastor from the pulpit or classroom is an act of Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit energizes the message, it aids in guiding the people to serve God in the advancement of the Kingdom.[13]

Living out a relationship with God suggests people should demonstrate love and care for all people. Justice should not be a question on any level. People should have the ability to experience the power of God through various avenues. We believe that inherent in faith is the love of God and the latter can be manifested only in the love of the neighbor.[14]

What occurs when unhealthy relationships are formed? What occurs in the life of a parishioner attempting to grow through the personality and character of the pastor alone? It can present unrealistic expectations of that leader. Nevertheless, neither failure nor hostility can weaken the messenger's conviction that he has been sent by Jesus.[15]

Pastors must find ways to balance out being leadership of people while maintaining their own humanity and spirituality. Lenora Tubbs suggests that the administrative needs, pastoral needs, and endless interruptions attack the need for quiet during contemplative moments.[16] In those still moments, the minister can find answers for personal issues and lingering congregational problems.

The need for quiet speaks to the importance of being constantly focused on the divine. The minister that is dwelling in the presence of God is more likely to engage in

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[13] Forbes, James, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 19.

[14] James Cone, *Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 46.

[15] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship,* 213.

[16] Tubbs, *Prophetic Preaching,* 24.

self-care and self-reflection that is necessary to be more effective in the life of the church. Quiet moments provide the opportunity to stay balance and become an effective pastoral and prophetic voice for the people.

A pastor in this project context is in the unique position to stand as priest and prophet. The church is in an economically challenged part of the city and in the shadow of the state capitol offices. The environment serves as a dichotomy of the powerful and disenfranchised. Some of those influences have a tendency to enter into the worship space and influence the membership and leadership.

The parishioners look to the pastor to represent not only the spiritual growth and development of body, but they look to the minister to be a prominent voice to address the ills of the society also. Though the expectation has been set according to outside influences, it is not unreasonable to expect the pastor to speak to the ills of society and challenge the people to face injustice.

The challenge becomes how to foster a community that is focused on meeting the needs of a hurting and challenged people from this inside (church membership) to the outside (community-at-large). The minister is has the primary responsibility for setting the tone for the rest of the faith community. He or she must endeavor to establish genuine relationship with all in the congregation.

Though this endeavor is nearly impossible to achieve one-on-one with people, it is necessary to create an atmosphere that allows people to feel important, needed, and empowered.[17] The pastor sets the tone through two main methods—declaration (preaching and teaching) and presence.

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[17] Cooper and McClure, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit*, 24.

In the midst of declaration, the pastor can take on the tone of a priest or a prophet. The tone of the priest is focused mostly on presence. The availability or accessibility of a pastor can aid a parishioner in his or her walk with God. When sickness, death, promotion, or any other life event occurs, the priestly approach provides comfort and encouragement to navigate through various transitions.

However, the prophetic nature of a pastor calls to challenge a person to do more for the cause of Christ. The prophetic speaks to the hopeless and maligned to discover the power that rest within them to change the world. It also calls to the apathy of the privileged to use their gifts and skills to further challenge the injustice that exists in society.

With this tension between presence and action, it is necessary to look toward others within the organization who can foster a healthy breeding ground for these particular attributes to be exercised among the people. Church leadership or lay leadership are the agents that can help the church further to cause of the God.

Many times lay leadership can take on the personality of the pastor or reflect the attributes of Christ. The same expectations of integrity, grace, and love are necessary in a strong lay leadership. The truth of the gospel then is a truth that must be done and not simply spoken. To speak the truth without doing the truth is to contradict the truth one claims to affirm.[18]

Church leadership should reflect the values that are established for the local congregation. The hope is that all leadership would follow after the ways of Christ. The

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[18] Cone, *Speaking the Truth*, 47.

hope would be the values of the congregation would reflect the teachings and values of Christ. Nevertheless, freewill leaves room for people to act as they please.

Experiencing the love of God can come in many different forms. One of those avenues is through the tangible experience with those in leadership. Leaders can position themselves to be governed by many authorities. Authority is not always limited to people in position. Authority can be manifested through personal theology and traditions.

Whenever traditions enter the picture, they are potentially in opposition of what generally held as the foundation of truth for Christians—the scriptures. Traditions that have been handed to different generations of believers in a faith community can possess great power among the faith community. Depending on the nature of that tradition can determine the direction of leadership and parishioners.[19]

The traditions that are presented must be consistent with the scripture in order to have a biblical sound foundation. The tension is constantly examining whether or not these values line up with the Spirit of God. All leadership will be challenged on the validity of their calling to lead others by the values they maintain. James Forbes suggests, the authority of the pastor or leader is confirmed or ordained by the community of faith in response to the continuing counsel of the Holy Spirit.[20]

If the Holy Spirit is the one that confirms and affirms the authority of values for a congregation, then leadership must be governed by the truth that Christ represents and teaches. Then the discipleship of the people would be governed by an adherence to Christ because Christ is the assumed focal point of the church.[21] If traditions that are in the

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[19] Cooper and McClure, *Claiming Theology in the Pulpit,* 24.

[20] Forbes, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching,* 19.

[21] Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship,* 59.

fabric of a congregation, they can be strengthened by the constant affirmation of the people and leadership.

Lay leadership is called to look again and rediscover what God values in order for people to experience the power and love of God in their lives. Jesus was not one that desired to continue with the legalistic view of religion that plagued so many. Jesus desired for all people to experience God in a genuine and unique manner. He intentionally drew the oppressed into the experience by identifying with them through His living and teaching. Jesus walked in solidarity with the hopeless and oppressed in order to provide hope for all.[22]

In the same manner, those individuals who serve in leadership become vessels that can walk with people through moments of disgrace, persecution, and struggle like Jesus. In order for that experience to take place, the Holy Spirit must be the guide and driving force in making all things function according to His will. The Holy Spirit provides a path for all believers to come to common ground. As at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit removes barriers of social class, age, and privilege in order to address the deep inner needs of humanity. This central place of humanity provides all with the chance to experience the unifying strength of God.[23]

Though these ideas are most ideal for a church context, how does this reality become permanent in the experience of those who have been hurt by leadership or church environments that did not equip, empower, or educate them to become stronger through

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[22] Andrew Parks, *Triune Atonement: Christ's Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole Creation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 42.

[23] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Press, 2008), 189.

their faith journey? Why must there be any processing time for the pain that has been felt? How did the church arrive at this particular place?

The thought is presented that death has occurred within the social constructs the nation, civilization, and world that tears away at the importance of strong moral and religious standing.[24] This type of dying situation can produce many victims along the way. People are hurt because the care that was once demonstrated toward the maligned has passed. More focus is placed on sustaining an institution rather than continuing the mission that made the institution powerful and great.

People are living with the pain of being abusive leadership, self-serving attitudes, and godless examples of morality. All of these problems create two opportunities. First, the church is present the chance to rectify the pain incurred by previous examples of wrong. Second, the church can identify ways to prevent further damage that can be caused by unskilled leadership.

Consider for a moment that abuse of power or maintaining a culture rigid in personal traditions can be seen or understood as oppressive. The world presents many expressions of oppressive behavior through cultural indifference, economic disenfranchisement, and political maneuvering. In the same manner, similar activities in the life of a church can cause reactions within people that lead to feelings of bitterness and animosity.[25]

Through the lens of Black theology, many people in the church can find common ground regarding oppression. Through the challenges of life, many people have come to

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[24] Forbes, *The Holy Spirit and Preaching,* 60.

[25] Andrew Parks, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 19.

discover that Christ is real and is acquainted with struggle. Yet, the same Christ presents a victorious outcome in the midst of that oppression and struggle.[26]

The victory that the faith community would seek is to find healing from oppression and church hurt. Andrew Sung Park makes the church aware of the Korean concept of *Han.* This particular concept is an experience with deep inward pain. This pain is manifest through repressed feelings filtered through thoughts, actions, or emotions of an emotionally injured individual.[27]

The *Han* that is created by subjecting parishioners to theology that is rooted in personality and tradition alone can be a broken view of God. The church may subject people to believing that God is beyond their reach because of different limitations, social status, or understanding of church culture. The miscommunication could be that becoming a part of the church culture will ensure salvation or an increase in the love of God.

The confusion leads people on a path to attempt to discover God outside of the local body of the church. This pain creates might aid in the movement of people become spiritual, but not religious. It may also produce reactions that make God appear to be weaker than the ineffective church environments.

However, the same pain may lend itself to seeking healing from the problems of the past. Healing is definitely different from being cured. Being cured suggests that the disease is now gone, but it does not guarantee that the disease will not return. Healing is more inclusive: it has physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. It is a deliverance from

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[26] James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 120.

[27] Park, *The Wounded Heart of God,* 42.

the bondage of illness, from fragmentary life, from meaninglessness, or from hopelessness.[28]

From this definition of healing, pastoral and church leadership must serve as agents to facilitate the opportunity to overcome the various areas of wounding that persists in the lives of individuals who come through the doors of churches everywhere. The nature of becoming vessels of change and healing is prophetic in nature. Prophetic speech and activity speaks against the status quo of an institution or framework that responds against the will of God. The prophetic activity of the pulpit and the congregation pushes all leadership to consider the appropriate response to the hurting.[29]

The beginning of the healing process for the wounded starts with a leadership that is prepared to embrace the maligned. The movement toward restoration begins with the interaction of the suffering. The activity of reflecting the love of God toward those in pain is a part of the prophetic witness of the grounded and focused leadership.[30]

In order to pull the hurting and leadership together, the church must come back to a place of quiet contemplation. The common ground that is suggested prayer. In order for the church to fulfill the mission of restoration and healing, it must being with being in a season of prayer for the leadership, the oppressed, and the challenges beyond the wall of the church house.[31]

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[28] Andrew Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 132.

[29] Marvin McMichael, *Where Have All the Prophets Gone?: Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006), 2.

[30] Tubbs, *Prophetic Preaching,* 25.

[31] Tubbs, *Prophetic Preaching,* 33.

Regardless of positioning within a congregation, the introspective activities of believers create a space for all people to consider the common ground that brings everyone together. No one is exempt from pain. No one is exempt from troubles, trials, or painful circumstances. This place helps the leader maintain his or her humanity. This bond reminds all of the frailty that comes with living in this life.

The challenges of navigating through leadership difficulties and processing pain at times can become overwhelming. The church aims for the highest goal of Christendom—to reflect the loving presence of God. Through the filters of limited understanding, humanity attempts to box in how that experience must occur. Even with good intentions, people can confuse the translation of the will of God.

Effort is required by believers to rise above the challenges of the present age. The church must reach toward the ideal practices of the love of God in order to draw people not to the culture of the local church but the God of the local church. It is important that the church constantly examines how the values and teaching of God are being presented. It must not stop with personal feelings alone. Introspection requires the ability to adjust to truth that must govern the life of the believer.

Leading is not always a simple matter. It challenges the strength of personal conviction. It addresses the moral fabric of a leader. Leadership constantly places before the public the true nature and intentions of an individual. For a pastor, leadership reveals the demands, realistic or not, that lie ahead daily.

However, leadership in the body of Christ gives the invitation to live out a peculiar calling. By the aid of the Holy Spirit, pastors and church leaders are able to fulfill a priestly and prophetic call to arms. One cannot be very prophetic without being

pastoral; one cannot be very pastoral without being prophetic.[32] By taking on this task, the church creates the breeding ground for healing, change, and wholeness.

[32] Wogaman, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, 27.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Organizations have moments when they must reassess their placement in the business or social context. As an organization begins to examine the issues that can cause a lack of productivity, it can rely on many different forms of information to learn how to best improve efficiency, production, and reliability. Methods and ideas can be adopted from others entity within a concentration that is specific to the mission of an organization, or the concepts may be received from other areas of society.

The church is challenged with referencing other methodologies when dealing with problems and circumstances that can occur in church life. The sacred nature that many people can hold when dealing with the church can potentially be a barrier to taking positive steps toward resolution. The idea of using any type of method or process from a business setting, public service area, or any other concentration might be considered a worldly approach to the holy.

Nevertheless, wisdom suggests that people must take the time to examine how others process practices and attitudes that are not unique only to one context. Leadership difficulties are not unique to the church setting. Businesses have personality conflicts between upper management and middle management. The political arena cannot always

agree on a unified direction in order to govern a city, state, or the nation. The medical field may have tribal qualities regarding doctors and nurse.

In any setting of life, one can find a resolution to a problem. However, searching for the answer in other fields can bring comfort to the church. The knowledge statement, "We are not alone," can provide a sense of relief in the process developing a method of resolution. Even developing an idea for improvement is a holy work. It is an opportunity to understand better the attitudes of others and the future direction to be assumed by an organization. In the case of this project, the direction must be focused for the church.

The thought has been established that the project context has a few different issues that must be addressed. First, leadership structure must be adjusted. Secondly, a new voice or tone of leadership must be championed. Thirdly, people must experience a healing process from prior issues in the life of the church. These issues could be generalized as the need to address broken leadership systems and facilitate healing for injured leadership and followers.

This problem can be seen through several different vantage points. In this case, two areas can be used to address leadership, brokenness, and structure—business and mental health. The business world addresses various models of leadership that can be effective in any organization. Many companies are have been known for redirecting business models and leadership structures. Every idea of leadership or cohesiveness may not apply in the church context. However, each model can provide some methodology in creating a stronger organization that represents the core values that are most important to the church or any other.

Mental health can unveil the various problems that represent internal conflict that every person faces daily. Leadership and congregants wrestle with more than just the need for spiritual growth. Individuals have many ideas about how life and organization should work. Some personality traits do not match within certain work cultures or representation of the core values of an organization. Understanding the mind can assist in framing new ways of meeting the needs of all people who may engage with the church in some manner. This recognition can positively affect the advancement of a congregation.

When addressing leadership, one must examine various aspects that can affect the growth, development, and longevity of an organization. Many companies and churches alike have been subject to the personality of one person. Even though a personality can give some scope to the ideals of a unit, it cannot always sustain the future of a group. Holding on to the personality of a leader alone may cause an organization to lose identity with consumers and congregants.

A portion of the issue that the context of this project study was attaching the identity of the church to the personality of the pastor. That style of leadership has moved into the various parts of the church causing leaders to lose effectiveness and uniqueness. Each person is caught between arising from the shadow of the past and holding to the model as a guide for addressing the needs of the people.

The current view of leadership has produced confusion among other leaders, distrust of membership with current leadership, and ineffective methods of expanding the reach of the organization. With these problems, the focus of leadership is not on serving the people. However, the agenda is constantly finding ways to justify the behavior that has been presented for many years.

Leadership Types

When leadership is singularly focused, others who serve in others areas of organizational leadership suffer in many ways. They are beholding to the wishes of one. They are limited in creativity. Individuals cannot fulfill greater expansion for the future of the church or company. The view is so limited that it becomes impossible for the organization to be more for the community or others. The organization becomes pigeonholed as an entity that is unwilling to serve people.

The model of the dominant leader usually suggests that the only purpose of an organization is to address the goals and objectives of the primary visionary. The strategies and goals are not geared to serving the greater interests of the parishioner, consumer, or other people. The goal of one supersedes the ability to reach many.[1]

This type of reasoning is beginning to decline in the business world. In many cases, the model of singular leadership is giving way to a model of cooperative, servant-led leadership. More people are discovering the necessity for placing the needs of the masses and even the leadership team ahead of the egocentric view of leadership.

Servant leadership is a term that can simply be described as leadership focused on serving others. People who demonstrate servanthood within various organizations are keenly aware of the needs of leaders, consumers, and the community-at-large. The manner by which this type of model of leadership is energized is through opening the channels of information for all.[2]

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[1] Robert K. Greenleaf and Larry C. Spears, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2002), 153.

[2] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 153-154.

This concept may appear to be a methodology that does not fit the nature of the business world. However, consider the bottom line for many businesses—profits. If a company cannot sustain growth through growing monetary gain, it will ultimately suffer and shut down. The need for growing profits begins with the consumer. The company must attract the business by appealing to the buyer. How will this attraction occur?

A consumer must believe that they are important. That importance is magnified through service and commitment of the company. That level dedication is usually reflected through the execution of the core values. The work ethic of the organization now is focused on provide the best service possible to the consumer. That effort causes the business to be seen as a serving institution.[3]

In like manner, the church is marketed as a serving entity that is to be focused on the needs and desires of the congregation. Whenever the work of the church becomes guide by self-serving motives, it loses the appeal necessary to draw people closer to God, community, and faith. These motives of leadership would suggest that the people do not know or are ill equipped to execute the core values of the faith community.

Ideally, the core values of a church must be grounded in the biblical text. Jesus has already dictated a blueprint for effective discipleship. However, the influence of a singular leader can present danger to church to reflect the ideology of the leader of Christ. If that mentality lacks service, all people will suffer in the process.

As in the business world, the church is a people-oriented environment. Without people the congregation is doomed to become irrelevant. Leadership that is not engaged with the people is problematic. It suggests that leadership is only concerned with

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[3] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 155.

fulfilling projects that may or may not suit the best interest of the people. Furthermore, the culture of an organization might be guided by the need for greater performance on paper than productively that reflects satisfied individuals.

The imagery of a leader being a visionary has as connotation of a person who is consumed with bring to life thoughts the he or she wishes to apply to the building and growth of organization. This attribute at times is applied to the nature of being a pastor, CEO, or some other executive. With this idea of leadership, many people could envision someone who is constantly bombarded by paperwork, meetings, and other responsibilities.

Many executives find themselves attempting to meet deadlines, goals, and objectives that will bring significant attention to their businesses or organizations. The pursuit of those types of goals can illuminate potential deficiencies in leadership style, organizational structure, and cultural norms. Any type of shortcoming in those areas can become detrimental to the overall vision and focus of an organization.

Every organization that exists only lives because of the presence, influence, and abilities of many people. Therefore, the leader who is oblivious to the need for people and their talents will cause damage to the effectiveness of the company. Leaders can potentially become slaves to tasks and superficial accomplishments. Hans Finzel knows the leader that is constantly inundated by busy work as the task oriented leader.[4]

Because of the mounting redefining of leadership, many people lose touch with how leaders can truly be most effective. Leadership is essentially a people business.[5] The

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[4] Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 48.

[5] Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make,* 49.

more time is spent with people, the more effective a leader can be. The constant interaction with people provides new avenues to address problem solving, organizational shortcomings, structural wellness, and gift discovery within the organization.

The task-oriented leader struggles with addressing the normal, human interaction with people because the work becomes the greater priority. Achievement of a task matters more than the wellbeing of those who can make the load lighter. The goal takes away from discovering the abilities of those around. Tasks do lead an organization toward desired results. However, the effectiveness and quality of the tasks are ultimately determined by how much interaction is taking place within the organization.

Another type of leader that can be akin to one whom is task oriented is the dictator. This individual is focused two major elements—ego and control. Whenever a project is being developed, the dictator has a predetermined destination regarding the direction of a project, organization, or leadership. A dictator has no regard for those who are assigned to work for him or her. The reality is that this type of leadership style does not welcome creativity, opinions, and efforts of subordinates.

This type of executive does not value the worth of the people in the organization. The ego that drives the decisions that are made usually compensate for a deficiency that exists. A dictator projects personal insecurities toward those subordinates. This type of leader is unwilling to do any introspective searching to recognize the strengths or weakness in his or her personality.

While he or she may be driven by selfish motives, a dictator, much like a task-oriented leader, is focused on results. They both mark desired expectations as the pinnacle of accomplishment. However, the dictator is willing to accomplish missions and

goals at the risk of personal deficit (personal, emotional, or mental) or destruction of the self-esteem of others.

When assessing leadership styles, Jim Collins addresses one more style of leadership that can be influential on the movement of any organization is the Level 5 executive. The Level 5 executive possesses many qualities that can positively influence the culture and environment of an organization.

The Level 5 executive builds enduring greatness through a paradoxieal blend of personal humility and professional humility and professional will.[6] The leadership style of this organizational leader is not devoid of ego and focus. It is not absent of direction or focus. Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company.[7]

This type of leader recognizes that the right people make the dreams and vision work. These executives know various types of individuals that can effectively contribute to the organization. Whenever suecess occurs for the group, they defer the attention to all of the contributors to the project. The energy that would be normally reserved for building the self-serving agenda becomes exclusively reserved for witnessing the organizational achievement.

In each brief assessment of various leadership styles, three areas exist where leaders have the greatest influence to an organization—culture, teamwork, and success. Each leader sets the tone by which a company or institution flows. All of these areas can make or break the success that is desired by any organization.

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[6] James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001), 20.

[7] Collins, *Good to Great*, 21.

Examination through the Pastoral Role

Pastors functioning in many ways like a CEO of a company. The spiritual leader must constantly address the needs of the church (spiritual, congregational, and fiscal). Those issues are affected with environmental changes, economic shifts, personality conflicts, and other variables. The pastor is tasked with possessing a style of leadership and personality that can navigate the people through the change.

The previous leadership types give a sense of what can function in the life of any church. Each type of leader presents significant strengths and weaknesses depending upon the already existing environment and culture. Dictators may not survive in an organization that has a culture of servanthood. A task-oriented leader may not see the value of praising those in a team building structure.

All leadership styles are not perfect matches. Nevertheless, any leadership structure can be the catalyst for prosperous or failing working culture. Consider the functionality of the various leadership styles and cultures that can become the norm of a church or any other environment.

The dictator is motivated by ego and personal interest. In the life of the church, a pastor with this type of mentality would be seen as negative to the progression of the Gospel message. The general thought still exists that pastors are servants called and chosen of God to lead believers into greater understanding and effective manners of living.

Though this idea may be the general consensus of most believers, consideration must be given to the variables of environment and culture in the local church context. The community of believers may be accustomed to a leader who has absolute power and

authority of all decisions and ideas. The necessity of people in the congregation may be limited to strictly attendance, finance, and perception of success.

If the church has perceived success in the eyes of other people, the wellbeing of the membership, leadership, and potential partners becomes the secondary idea of the pastor. People will continue to feed into the goals and objectives as long as results are seen. The leader will continue to feed on the weakness of others and the high of prestige. This environment becomes toxic to the mission of the church.

Ultimately, the organization has created a breeding ground for professional addiction issues. Self-centeredness is a prominent characteristic of addicts and the addictive system. This is partially because getting the fix becomes the center of the life of a pastor or leader.[8] When that standard is set, the possibility of improving the environment for all people becomes a greater challenge. The condition of the church has become commonplace.

The task-oriented leader can be found in a similar position as the dictator when addressing issues of environment and culture. As mentioned earlier, the task is the most important aspect of the leadership structure. Therefore, more energy is placed into the completion of the task rather connecting with those who can bring greater perspective to the task at hand.

The definition of pastor in some local churches can be strictly people-focused or paper-driven. In other words, the pastor that is with the people is demonstrating pastoral

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[8] Anne Wilson Schaef and Diane Fassel, *The Addictive Organization Why We Overwork, Cover Up, Pick up the Pieces, Please the Boss, and Perpetuate Sick Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 63.

attributes. If a church has a culture of seeing the pastor only on Sunday and doing deskwork through the week, the environment suggests that pastoral responsibility is only static and functional.

The leader that is determined to see change happen in the corporate or spiritual atmosphere must have some level of personal contact with others. A pastor is unable to truly meet the challenges of a congregation without having interaction with people. Finzel suggests that direct contact possesses the most powerful means of influencing and changing the lives of people.[9]

When focused on achieving a task or goal, a minister becomes subject to dismissing the presence, influence, or interaction with individuals who can give a clear picture to what needs exist among the parishioners. A person that is driven by deadlines and achievement loses the opportunity to encounter the gifts that exist within the leadership structure.

This reality can illuminate the weakness of perfectionism. A leader that is constantly attempting achieve might become extremely critical of everything he or she attempts. This issue highlights the insecurity of being good enough for the environment presented. The obsession to be perfect can present a warped sense of progressing from being the worst to becoming the best.[10]

The servant leader model of leadership presents two main attributes—leadership and service. An individual many times is challenged with choosing one extreme or

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[9] Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, 53.

[10] Schaef and Fassel, *The Addictive Organization*, 64.

another. Most people understand a servant-first individual to constantly place the concerns of others above his or her own needs. [11]

The leader-first extreme assumes that a leader will focus on maintaining the status quo issues of an organization. The leader-first is concerned with addressing the vision more than the issues of others. They are not insensitive to the problems or concerns of those within the organization. However, the challenges of people within the church or organization are not a driving force for decisions made or vision cast.

The balancing act that occurs in the servant-leader model presents an interesting challenge to the pastor. The pursuit of finding common ground between the two extremes of leadership can potentially unveil similar challenges that the previous mentioned leadership models face.

By focusing on being a servant-leader, a pastor can possibly negate the talents or gifts of others within the organization due to addressing the sensitivity or issues of others first. The focus of the pastor or leader becomes more about pleasing others and attending to the needs or shortcomings of others.

The vision is still a goal. However, it becomes driven by the need to compensate for the potential frailty in the structure of the organization. Therefore, the leader becomes driven to carry a greater load of the responsibility for the task completion and accomplishment.

The Level 5 executive presents an image of an individual willing give all in the organization the opportunity to let their talents and abilities shine for the betterment of

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[11] Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 28.

all. This type of pastor is able to recognize the skill level of other within the congregation and leadership structure that will push the agenda and purpose of the local body forward. Satisfaction is achieved only when the whole body prospers.

The pastor with this type of skill set is willing to take the steps necessary to advance the health and wellbeing of the congregation beyond the time that is allotted his or her leadership in a context. They take the responsibility for being a barometer for the success and advancement of the organization. At the same time, they give praise to those individuals who cause progress to occur for the group.

Samuel Chand highlighted in a presentation three ways that cause a church or any organization to prosper or suffer. First, leaders try to do everything. Second, the pastor may outsource responsibilities to others. Third, the leader may develop others. Depending on the view of the pastor/executive, all of these methods of leading have a price that some are unwilling to pay.[12]

The concept of training people many times is focused on accomplishing tasks for the organization, but not advancing people into possible opportunities to lead their own organizations, ministries, or churches. A Level 5 type pastor could address the continued progress of the organization through a development process that brings understanding to the following concepts: understanding individual purpose, the importance of his or her role, dealing with potential disappointments and success, and the igniting of passion and potential.[13]

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[12] Samuel R. Chand, *Who's Holding Your Ladder?: Selecting Your Leaders, Leadership's Most Critical Decision* (Niles, IL: Mail Publishing, 2003), 4.

[13] Chand, *Who's Holding Your Ladder,* 6.

Culture Shifting

Leaders set the tone for how an operation functions and the type of environment that people where people will thrive. It is a constant mission to promote the value of those within certain leadership roles. Pastors are also challenged with the conflicts that come with change, growth, and personalities.

The growing process of a church can uncover some past difficulties and hindrances to further development. When attempting to grow leaders must consider nurturing people and the organization toward maximizing its abilities and reach. Growth does not happen always by sheer will and desire alone.[14]

Growth is tempered when understanding the nature and culture of the church or organization in its current form. If a church has a culture of distrust, it may have a leadership model that lends itself to being ego driven. If the people do not feel the ability to become more in this environment, they will begin to lose zeal, passion, and drive for the mission and purpose of the church.

The ministry that lacks the desire to reach beyond the walls, encourage the development of future leaders, or empower the parishioner will be stunted in reach its full potential. The church, as an organism, will remain primitive in nature. It will lack the ability beyond the narrow view of its culture.[15] The culture that is constantly focused on results, benefits, and praise will potentially affect the leadership and parishioners in a negative manner.

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[14] Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, Edited by Margaret M. Treadwell (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2007), 144.

[15] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 144.

If workers, leaders, and parishioners have endured an environment that has ridiculed and treated the spiritual and emotional conditions of people as secondary, it would suggest that the environment must begin to shift practices toward a healing process for all. The church is not just a figurative hospital for the sinner. The local church represents an entity that appears to offer opportunities for individuals to become better people in society and beyond. How is this process birthed?

When wounded people are attempting to function in an organization or church setting, many feelings, and revelation can be unveiled. Personality conflicts can lead to discord. Unsettled personal issues can manifest into unprompted attacks on people. Organizational changes can provide resistance because of previous behaviors.

However, each circumstance previously mentioned can be the manifestation of deeper pain. In certain cases, the problems may be rooted in the need for forgiveness. People may need to forgive others for previous issues directed toward them. Some individuals may need to forgive himself or herself for bad decisions made.

The issue of forgiveness is constant challenge even within leadership and church life. Forgiveness requires a deep humility. Worthington quotes Andrew Murray calling humility the blossom of which death to self is the perfect fruit.[16] Being a humble individual suggests that one has the willingness to listen to others, embrace the journey that people have traveled, and recognize the power of experiences.

People must be willing to recognize that the nature of forgiveness must be an intricate part of profcssional and congregational development. Part of the humility that a

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[16] Everett L. Worthington, *A Just Forgiveness: Responsible Healing without Excusing Injustice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 41.

person must display begins with a sense of grace. Given that people are prone to fail in some fashion, people have the opportunity to operate from a place of understanding.

If leadership and people do not function with a humble nature regarding the value of others, forgiveness and healing can be impeded. Those with the intentions of maintaining the culture of self will always present resistance to change, growth, and forgiveness. At times, self-righteousness makes us feel special, and it covers feelings of inadequacy, failure with pride and an inflated sense of perfection.[17]

Humility removes the ability to mask behaviors. It leaves people in position of vulnerability and transparency. The nature of openness leaves people questioning whether or not people can handle the totality of what people are spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. Thus, people are seeking constantly to find places to be accepted in their current brokenness.

In counseling circles, the use of group therapy can be a very effective way to allow people to address their issues, pains, and inner conflicts. This type of therapy provides a space to interact with others while working through individual emotional problems and concerns.

Though this counseling method is not necessary used in church life, the concept has some qualities that can be used to effectively address the needs of the people. First and foremost, it can create new support groups much like the small group model of ministry. It allows for individuals to discover people that in the same type of

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[17] Bobby B. Cunningham, "The will to forgive: a pastoral theological view of forgiving," *Journal Of Pastoral Care* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 1985): 142, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host* (accessed December 2, 2014).

predicament, endured similar challenges, or discover support systems that can help navigate through emotions.

Secondly, creating a safe space for expression illuminates many group dynamics that may be effective or toxic. People who are honest about where they are in their journey have the capacity to address their pains and joys. In an environment that promotes the value of the individual, people can discover safety in addressing important issues that will begin the process toward the experience of healing their lives.

When combining the nature of an effective leader with the culture of personal value, a church can begin to build a congregation of strength and integrity that draws people toward the power of God. People find comfort in knowing that individuals truly care about their existence beyond what they can provide for the institution. When all efforts of the local church are focused on addressing the spiritual and emotional needs of the people, parishioners potentially will experience greater change in their lives.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The journey of a new pastor and congregation can be challenging on many level. Both sides are constantly finding ways to engage each other. Both sides are bringing various issues from the past to the table. At the same time, pastor and people are doing everything they can to avoid revealing all the baggage from past.

Comedian Chris Rock presents a concept about relationsbips that can be applicable to the pastor/church dynamic. When people first meet, they are not meeting the person; but they are meeting the representative. To better quantify the thought, the church and pastor will not always reveal everything about themselves in order to process together as a unit toward a new future.

Everyone started off guarded about what past pain and hurt had been experienced. Consider the nature of a pastor who is dealing with extreme trust issues with leadership. In his former appointment, the young pastor preached, taught, and administrated the church. The church experienced growth numerically and financially. Things were going well.

However, appointed trustees decided arbitrarily to reduce the salary of the pastor by half. Was there any moral issues occurring? No. Did a scandal break out in the congregation? No. Was the preaching or teaching lacking in anyway? No. As a matter of fact, the trustees reaffirmed their full confidence in the preaching and teaching prowess of

the undershepherd. So what was the issue? It came down to dollars and cents. The call of God was quantified into a fiscal bottom line. This type of situation will breed trust issues.

Let us consider the various challenges of the Pleasant Grove congregation. Fifteen years of pastoral leadership produced many visible and tangible marks that were reached. Of course, people became attached to the personality of the pastor. Yet, members of leadership and the congregation admit not receiving the level of spiritual empowerment necessary to be sustained as a growing believer.

Spiritual and theological training was not the primary agenda of the pastor. Many people were bullied into accepting the word of the pastor as gospel. Questions were never encouraged. Most of the time questions exposed the lack of understanding and preparation that the former pastor possessed. The academic credentials that were displayed by the former pastor proved to be fabricated.

The people struggled with a leader who lied about his abilities. The congregation felt the sting of bis departure. Many people were still dealing with a theology crafted by one person and in conflict with scripture. Some individuals still live in the past thinking about the myriad of activities; but they do not know that most of the programs lacked secure spiritual foundation.

A wounded people meet a wounded pastor. Both sides need to experience revival and acceptance. This overall project presented the opportunity for pastor and people to undergo a process of biblical equipping, empowerment, and education. These various aspects of this journey will reveal the implementation and reaction for each learning experience and preaching opportunity.

Overview of the Project

The main objective of this project is to develop a model that will address church hurt, leadership deficiencies, and membership empowerment. This objective will be accomplished through the following avenues:

- Educating the congregation about the role and responsibilities of pastoral and church leadership
- Addressing church hurt issues among the congregation
- Promoting tools to aid in establishing trust between leadership and congregation, and healing from past circumstances.

Lack of leadership has been seen as the main problem within the context. However, time has revealed a disconnection between perception and reality. Addressing the problems with leadership alone does not provide a complete picture of the pain that exists within the congregation. Therefore, the model will provide all parishioners the chance to examine his or her role in the growth of the church and healing process from the past.

Summit Series

The Summit Series was a teaching series developed after a previous Christian education event at the church. The original summit was an opportunity to develop associate ministers, teachers, and parishioners in learning new study and teaching methods based on the dialectic method. Many of the participants expressed how they enjoy the summit. However, the amount of information that was received was so overwhelming that they wanted another opportunity to digest the information in smaller portions for better understanding.

The design of the Summit Series was to be a once a month experience to learn the spiritual and practical use of each element of the dialectic. The book, *The Certain Sound of the Trumpet* served as a reference for study. The timetable for the implementation of the series laid out in this manner:

- January 10th, 2015: Focus on the Word (Proposition)
- February 7th, 2015: Addressing Current Reality (Antithesis)
- March 7th, 2015: The Thoughts of God on the Subject (Thesis)
- April 11th, 2015: Asking the Right Question (Relevant Question)
- May 2nd, 2015: Examining the Necessary Answers (Synthesis)
- June 6th, 2015: Applying Your Understanding (Close)

Throughout the time of the teaching event, the attendance averaged fifteen members per session. Each session provided room for the participants to fully express their feelings on the subject matter and provide their own interpretation of the material for understanding. One of the most relevant sessions that occurred during the series was in February.

The title of the session was "Addressing Current Reality." The lesson addressed the area of the Antithesis. The simple meaning of antithesis is that which is opposed to the thesis of a thought. Within the context of sermon building it is the current state of affairs that the world presents in opposition to the Word of God. Through the process of understanding the antithesis it provides a greater opportunity for revelation in the text.

The lesson came from Isaiah 6:8-13. Isaiah is still in the midst of his experience with God in the temple. He has witnessed the glory of God and his personal deliverance from his unclean mouth issue. Isaiah was called by God to speak to the conditions of the day.

One of the greatest complaints in the congregation was about the relevance of messages or lessons dealing with what is occurring in the world today. Many people constantly suggested that they could not always see the connection between the Bible and facing the challenges of the world. In the lesson, four questions were addressed.

- What is the world telling us?
- Why must we pay attention to society at large?
- Is there a message from personal exegesis?
- Why us?

In the preparation of a sermon, lesson, or personal study, the learner is compelled to examine all of the various aspects of life in juxtaposed to the scripture that we read. The thought was raised in conversation that it is sometimes difficult to view the Gospel through the lens of what the world represents. Some of that thinking may be based on the thought that the world is so evil that it can never offer insight. However, the evil that witness in the world today provides evidence of what happens when the Bible is not applied in an effective manner.

Most of the students who came to this session wanted to see how to make the message relevant on a significant level. At that moment, the thought on personal exegesis became a relevant topic for discussion. At every level of study, personal assessment is involved to see about how an individual fits within the text and what it speaks to the life of that student. Many times, people do not always recognize how much one sees himself or herself within scripture.

The nature of self-examination became a necessary topic of discussion, because most of the participants were trying to find their place within the life of the universal

church. Many people were attempting to understand how they could be most effective without necessarily functioning with a title or major responsibility. Many of them still viewed the nature of sharing the Gospel as a preacher/pastor only responsibility. Very few of those in attendance considered that their potential for evangelism could be enhanced by a greater personal understanding of the text. From this conversation, many prevalent themes came to the forefront.

1. *The nature of ministry*—Many people are still confused about what ministry really is. Some parishioners still believe that ministry is strictly about preaching and teaching alone. Therefore, the preacher or trained teacher is the only one that can effectively dispense the truth of the Gospel to the world. Some individuals do not feel empowered to fulfill the Great Commission given my Jesus. The spreading of the Gospel is not completely understood as a corporate move of a congregation. It is limited to a very specific responsibility.

2. *The true responsibility of the believer*—The body of Christ is called to reach the world through the spreading of the Word, addressing the needs of those who the *least of these,* and present a moral example to the world. The challenge that the congregation encounters is trying to overcome individual and corporate insecurities about witnessing for the Kingdom of God. The proper analysis of the Bible gives the believer the opportunity to witness how God speaks directly to any situation. Personal reflection also gives the believer the opportunity to stand in authority on the knowledge of what God is fully capable of doing.

3. *Relationship is key understanding*—The believer is fully engaged in a relationship with a spiritual being. Relationship compels the full engagement of human faculties. A person uses his or her mind, emotions, and spiritual energy to engage in connecting with an individual. For those reasons, many people talk about having a relationship with God not just a God-based religious practice. The active pursuit of the believer begins in the heart, but it must not be limited to emotionalism. Personal exegesis, through the examination of a text, gives a Christian a greater idea about what God thinks about humanity. It also grants opportunity for greater growth and development in God.

4. *Work must be done*—The major concept that come through engagement with God is that a job is waiting on those who believe. If ministry is not a singular or limited enterprise, the suggestion is that all people have a role to serve in expanding the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, the nature of II Timothy 2:15 becomes more prevalent to the advancement of the development of all

> believers. Study and understanding cannot be divorced from spiritual growth and spirituality. Understanding cannot be an afterthought in the effectiveness of personal witness.

After six months of examining the various aspects of the dialectic, countless ideas were brought to the forefront. Many people began to question the different ideas that once existed about ministry. In some instances, people witness a shifting in thoughts about their own effectiveness in the local church. Some people were still uncomfortable with the idea of responsibility through leadership. Yet some parishioners stated that the time spent on this method of thinking, preparation, and study gave them a greater appreciation for the theological work that the pastor puts in preaching and teaching.

The Leadership Manual

The end of 2014 brought about preparation for the next phase of this project. The timeline below gives the layout of the implementation of the project.

- December 21st, 2014: Distribution of pre-test questionnaires
- December 28th, 2014: Collection and examination of questionnaires
- January 4, 2015: Understanding the Workings of the Undershepherd (I Timothy 3:1-7)
- January 11, 2015: Service at the Master's Table (Acts 6:1-7)
- January 18, 2015: The Character of the Believer (Romans 12:9-21)
- January 25, 2015: Unique and Diverse (I Corinthians 12:20-26)
- February 1, 2015: Equipped to Move Forward (Ephesians 4:11-16)

One of the great challenges that Pleasant Grove still struggled with was the nature of leadership. Many people had many views regarding what role leadership plays in the life of the church. All people have opinions. The initial goal before the beginning of the preaching series was to gauge what the parishioners believed about leadership. Therefore,

a questionnaire was developed to discover the feelings that the church had about leadership. The questions were the following:

1. What is your understanding of leadership?
2. What is your understanding of the role of the Pastor?
3. Have you ever been taught about Biblical leadership?
4. What characteristics do you look for in a leader?
5. Have you had a painful experience in church?
6. Have you recovered from that experience?

The questionnaire was distributed to all people in the congregation. However, only fifty-five people responded to the questions.

The responses to the questions were very interesting. The answers demonstrated the variety of thoughts that exist within the congregation. In the gathering of information, various concepts were shared.

1. *Understanding of Leadership*—Many people shared that leadership is a viewed as a role that guided by the Holy Spirit. True leadership functions with authority, love, and understanding. Leadership is about living out your core values and beliefs. Ultimately, leadership is about being focused on going in a very specific direction.
2. *The Role of the Pastor*—Reading the ideas concerning the role of the pastor is interesting. Many people limit the pastoral role to just functioning as a preacher/teacher only. Other thoughts suggested that the pastor is needed more as a loving shepherd who addresses more of the emotional needs of the people. The other role that the pastor plays is as visionary for the local church.
3. *Biblical Leadership*—Many of the respondents to the questionnaire said that they have learned about Biblical leadership. However, other respondents said that their learning of the subject was limited to non-existent.
4. *Characteristics of a Leader*—The parishioners listed the following character traits that are important for a leader to possess:
    - Love
    - Patience

- Focus
- Unity
- Decisive
- Spiritual

5. *Painful Experiences*—This question was not answered by all who participated in the questionnaire. Those who answered did not go into great detail about their experiences. However, those who shared the going through an experience suggested that the pain was experienced prior to the arrival of the new pastor. In most cases, many people suggested that they were working through the pain of the past.

With the information gathered from the questionnaires, the preaching series was developed in order to address questions about the biblical roles of leaders, the importance of all people within the church, and the necessity for unity. The Leadership Manual series lasted for five weeks. Each message addressed the role of the pastor, deacons, and lay leadership. The series also addressed the value that all people have within the life of church.

Though leadership has been seen constantly as a role with an attached title, it is not limited to specific responsibilities and roles within the life of the church. Those individuals who have not occupied roles in the church needed a refreshing regarding their importance in the local church.

The fourth part of the series entitled, Unique and Diverse, presented the importance of diversity in gifts and talents in the Body of Christ. Many people believe that a cookie cutter view of an organization is the most effective manner to move people forward in the things of God. Embracing unique and factual perspectives is not always encouraged in many churches or beyond.

Nevertheless, God has designed every aspect of the Body of Christ to function in unity and purpose. Each person, gift, and ability is necessary to the advancement of the

cause of Christ. No role is insignificant. No person is unnecessary. The major question that came to the forefront was the following: How do we celebrate and encourage the unique parts of the Body of Christ?

1. *Celebrate the Value of Each Person*—Every person has a specific purpose to the local and global church. I Corinthians 12 teaches that the Body of Christ is diverse by nature. The church could never function as one entity. Every person is a necessary part of the advancement of the church. All people are not equipped with the same talents or gifts. Therefore, no role within the church is too small.

2. *Encourage those behind the Scenes*—In church life, people who serve willingly can gain a sense of burnout and weariness. When people serve God because it is right, appreciation is not always given. People want to know that their living and service is not in vain. At the same time, people who serve behind the scenes are doing it for a reason. Under certain circumstances, some individuals are more concerned about pleasing God than humanity. It is still important to demonstrate the love of God through fellowship and interaction with one another.

3. *United under One Common Focus*—The diversity of the local church provides significant flavor to the composition and direction that the local will take. The key element toward reaching a destination is unity. How does the local congregation achieve its goal? Everyone must be valued in a significant way. When people are seen as valuable, it removes the distraction of personal conflicts and differences. When people are seen as more than a number on a membership role, it fosters an environment for people to see clearly the things of God. People are no longer consumed with themselves, but they able to see and witness what God desires. The focus must be the Kingdom of God.

A united congregation has the foundation and ability to move forward into the future. When the people are focused on God, nothing is impossible. However, the journey requires the proper tools and equipment. More specifically, the church needs a word to give directions and guidance on the way to the greater promise.

The final part of the series, "Equipped to Move Forward," the church learned about the power of the Word to give clear guidance toward enhancement for the people of God and advance His agenda. The message of the Gospel presents strength and

guidance for moving the Kingdom forward. God uses specific types of leaders to mobilize and motivate the people of God toward the future.

Even though we realize the power of the Gospel, the church wrestles with becoming a place where everyone has an agenda on how to apply the Gospel message for personal benefit. If the ideas or truth of the Gospel does not benefit individual purposes, then the message is viewed weak and ineffective.

The message presented a significant thought for consideration. What types of word must leaders use to equip the Body of Christ for the future?

1. *Visionary Word*—The message of the Gospel has the ability to put life, purpose, and destiny into perspective. Though the message for the congregation flows the pastor or preacher, God knows what is necessary for the context to receive. The visionary word give direction toward what God ultimately desires for the life of people. That message must not be tampered with by human effort and bias. The truth of this message must yield itself as a servant willing to focus the church toward a greater work. A tampered word can be the sign human ego attempting to trump the truth of God. Howard Thurman suggests that the temptation is subtle for human beings to take credit for their own talents.[1] A visionary word constantly points the people toward the heart of God.

2. *Foundational Word*—Many people can be found attempting take in various theologies for the purpose of personal comfort. One of the factors in being blown in the wind is the lack of foundational understanding. It is generally accepted the Bible is the foundation that Christian use. However, people become lax on applying the principles of the Gospel to their lives. Many individuals do not want their living to be challenged in order to arrive in a new way of living. Every believer must discover the true strength that comes from an unchanging Gospel.

3. *Prophetic Word*—The nature of the prophetic is constantly changing in the minds of parishioners. For must church members, the prophetic word is limited to the things spoken by the prophets of the past. The reality is that the prophetic is a word or action that is used to motivate people toward work or change. When the prophetic is spoken, it is not a matter of the creative thought of humanity. It is a word that reminds us that Holy Spirit is in the business of guiding and directing the path of the people of God. Remember, it is the Spirit

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[1] Howard Thurman, *The Growing Edge*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1956), 157.

> not the Pastor who has both the responsibility and the capability of inspiring and directing change.[2]

I Am A Church Member

Later into the year, another preaching was set to focus on more on the nature of membership in Pleasant Grove. The "I Am a Church Member" series is based on the book written by Thom Rainer. The work gives insight into how church members can become more effective in their local church and witness.

Many members have shared their frustrations at times about making a difference within this particular context. The goal of this series was to begin the empowerment process of the church member by recognizing powerful ways to influence the environment of the Pleasant Grove Church. The timeline provides the Sundays, which the messages were executed.

- August 2nd, 2015: A Driven Witness
- August 9th, 2015: A Unifying Force
- August 23rd, 2015: It Pays to Serve Jesus
- August 30th: Don't Forget to Pray for Me
- September 6th, 2015: Establishing a Legacy of Strength
- September 13th, 2015: Precious Fellowship

In Pleasant Grove, the member does not always feel that they have a voice to make an impact. The culture has dictated a different view of how ministry is carried out. This type of culture has become toxic at moments. The toxicity may be carried in people suggesting that assigned seats exist, limitations should be placed on those who want to

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[2] Charles W. Taylor, *The Skilled Pastor: Counseling as the Practice of Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 125.

serve or people cannot participate in certain activities without meeting some unbiblical requirement.

When the church member does not feel a part of the community of believers, it become more challenging to engage them in going forward with the entire body. In everything that takes place, the whole community should feel a part of the process. It is suggested that good rituals bind the people who share them together. Rituals solidify moments of transition and reinforce the shared values of a community.[3]

The emphasis during the series was about self-examination and growth as a believer. At the same time, personal growth should ultimately influence the home and the local church. Out of growing in Christ, the member is lead toward committing to prayer for leadership, greater fiscal stewardship, and personal study. These elements are a portion of what makes a successful church go forward.

In the message, "Establishing a Legacy of Strength," the pastor dealt with the challenges of passing on a true legacy to the next generation. Within the Joshua 24 text, the leader of Israel made a declaration that his bouse was committed to serving God regardless of what others in the nation wanted. The choice was bold, because it put the entire family forward as leaders in their worship and commitment to God.

In the life of the church, committed family units are necessary parts of the lifeblood of the local church. The family unit is necessary to strengthen the congregation toward the purpose and destiny. Families truly rooted and strengthened in the will of God are focused on living out their encounter with God individually and collectively.

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[3] David A. Teutsch, *Spiritual Community: The Power to Restore Hope, Commitment, and Joy* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2005), 6.

However, families have lost a serious connection with the power and presence of God. Preoccupation with so many distractions has taken from families and others the chance to witness the power of God at work. Many people believe that their faith journey is rooted strictly in an indirect encounter with God. The relationship with God is not gained through osmosis. It is not an inheritance. It is gained through intentional encounter.

If the family unit is strengthened, the church should gained greater strength. Yet, the family bond dynamic that is shared in church life must be replicated through fellowship. The message, "Precious Fellowship," reflects on how the process of engagement with others is beneficial overall, but it can become challenging when it is not refreshed.

After a period of time, church membership can be seen as a tedious process. We can lose a sense of our connection and appreciation for God and our salvation. Familiarity can breed contempt for many things. Among the many complaints that people have expressed, some parishioners are annoyed by the way communion is served. The order of worship has become plain. Friendship moment (the opportunity for members to greet guests and each other) has become nonessential to some people.

Why would that happen? A disconnect exists in the community. Communion by its very nature places every individual on level ground. Recognizing that Jesus died for the sin of all during a ritual that has been held in churches around the world for years ought to possess great significance. If these actions are not affirmed, the community loses a sense of bonding. If the community witnessing the ritual affirms the ritual not just as

something they are happy to do, but something that is truly shared, then everyone present gains strength.[4]

So what is the beginning of shift the culture to a place renewing and empowering the Christian witness? When people consider where God brought them from, nothing can ever be taken for granted. The opportunity that has been given to every believer is to live the life God intended for humanity. The steps that can help in that process are the following:

- Intentionally Stay Connected to God
- Recall the Blessings of God
- Walk in Covenant with God Toward Our Future
- Remember Clearly Our Past
- Recall the Reach of the Love of God
- Understand and Recognize the Gift of Grace

The 3E Conference

The culmination of this project was the 3E Conference. Over the past several years, Pleasant Grove did not have a time for revival. In years, past the church had at least three revivals a year. Aloug with the revival throughout the year, conference type opportunities were created for study and improvement in the life of the church.

The 3E Conference would serve as an opportunity to try and reach church members through worship and education. The part of the design of the conference was based on the structure of the Charles E. Booth Preaching Conference. Worship services

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[4] Teutsch, *Spiritual Community*, 7.

would provide the energy necessary for the participants and others who simply wanted to worship in the congregation. The teaching sessions were place on one day for everyone to focus on the study of the theme and material.

The conference was held September 25th-27th at Pleasant Grove and the local Boys and Girls Club to facilitate the youth. The theme of the conference for 2015 was "Equipping Leaders to Empower the People and Educate All." The scripture foundation was Ephesians 4:11-13. Below is the schedule for the weekend of activities.

Friday Night

- 6:00-7:00pm: Registration
- 7:00pm: Worship Service

Saturday Morning & Afternoon

- 8:00-9:00am: Registration
- 9:00: Opening of the Conference
- 9:30-10:30am: Session I
- 10:30-10:45am: Break
- 10:45-11:45am: Session II
- 11:45am-2:00pm: Lunch
  - Luncheon
  - Panel Discussion
  - Award Presentation
  - Closing Remarks
  - Prayer/Benediction

Sunday Morning

- 9:30-10:30am: Sunday School
- 10:45am: Worship Service

The teaching sessions were divided into three tracks: a youth track, church member track, and a church leader track. The youth track class was facilitated by Reverend SirDon Lewis, of Fresh Visions Community Church in Springfield, Illinois and

Michael Phelon, former Branch Director of the Boys and Girls Club in Springfield, Illinois. They were charged with teaching the following courses:

1. The Character of a Godly Leader (1 Tm 4:6-16)—Youth learned about the qualities that are necessary to become a leader that God blesses and uses. Young people were able to learn the characteristics that Paul advised Timothy to possess as a leader in the church and life.
2. No Age to Leadership (2 Kgs 22:1-2, 23:1-20)—Youth were encouraged to activate their leadership and creative qualities to impact the world. They learned from the example of King Josiah how to walk in righteousness and integrity regardless of age.

The layperson track was facilitated by Pastor Samuel W. Hale of Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Springfield, Illinois. Reverend Hale is a highly respected pastor in the city and state who has taught on various areas of church life for over thirty-five years. He brought a familiarity to his teaching and approaches those in attendance. He addressed the following topics in the track:

1. The Priestly Tone of Leadership—The priestly (shepherd) view of leadership demonstrates the nature of a "priest" (leader) interceding on behalf of the people to God. They learned about the moments when it is necessary to call on God for the people.
2. The Prophetic Tone of Leadership—The prophetic (inspired) tone of leadership demonstrates the nature of the "prophet" (leader) speaking for God to the people. They discovered the necessity of the Spirit-inspired message to motivate the people to make an impact or change in the world.

The church leader track was led by Pastor Derrick K. Holmes of the Second Baptist Church in Circleville, Ohio. Prior to the pastorate, Reverend Holmes served in various capacities in church and civic leadership. He is a community activist with his most recent activity marching against police corruption in the wake of the Tamir Rice case. Pastor Holmes addressed the following subject matter during the conference:

1. The Difference between the Priest and the Prophet—A distinct difference exists between the nature of the priest (shepherd) and prophet (inspired

leader). Samuel served in both roles. The students learned about how each tone of leadership is distinct for the purpose of Kingdom advancement.

2. When Both Voices Are Necessary—Because Samuel served in the roles of priest and prophet, his voice compelled people to consider change in their lives. The voice of Samuel also caused God to consider His people. It was conveyed how important it was for the priestly and prophetic to help shape the nature of the church and believer.

At the end of the conference, questionnaires were given to gauge the effectiveness of the work. Of the forty participants that registered and participated, only ten of the participants responded. Many of the people spoke and said that they felt awkward about writing a review about a church event. A few of those people believed that it was not right to be judgmental about anything that is done in the Name of the Lord. It was an interesting response about the nature of being critical.

For the few that responded to the questionnaire, all shared favorable thoughts on the conference. All of the respondents suggested that the conference was an enhancement to their Christian education and wanted to be a part of the conference next year. Many people shared their hopes that next year the topic of forgiveness would be prominent in the learning exercises.

Reflections

After all of this typing, data collection, interviews, and study, how can this project truly be viewed? This project in many ways is an ongoing venture. It was explained at the heginning of this program that the goal was to create a model to help enhance a ministry to the point that it could be replicated in other ministries. The belief is that this work has plenty of opportunities for growth and continued development.

From this work, many conversations have been birthed. While sitting with the research team, conversation ensued about the nature of continued education for the congregation and church leadership. Team members shared about how much they did not know before taking on the challenge of helping in this process. Many of them were unaware about the constant struggles of pastoral role. A few were still confused about the roles that deacons and other leaders are supposed to play within the church according to Bible.

The transitions that have occurred over the past four years have unveiled many dynamics that could not have been anticipated initially. Nevertheless, the tension carried by the church and the current pastor was necessary. Why? A crossroads needed to be reached in order for the healing process to begin.

The church and pastor have been in need of understanding. The people do not always recognize how difficult serving in the pastoral capacity can be. Sunday is a manifestation of much time and prayer. Yet, the rest of the week is not always seen or viewed. The desire to educate, equip, and empower people is overshadowed by concerns that do not reflect Kingdom service.

The church is trying to find its place within the community and with the pastor. It is difficult to be scorned by a former leader. It is feels like the worst breakup in the world. At the same time, a new beau comes along and endures venom of the pain endured. The church wants to be cared for in a special way, but it cannot always receive what has been given.

The challenge remains to find a way to bridge the gap between healing and moving forward. The church should be the flexible and change-oriented institution

known to man. Why? Because it is to be ruled by Christ not us; because we are called to be directed by the Holy Spirit not by our own feelings or desires; because from its inception the church has been designed to reach every culture.[5]

Since the church is not reflecting the flexibility that ought to exist, the road toward empowerment must be examined. Members exist that are sorely afraid of change. The fear is sparked by lack of sensitivity to the environment, an unwillingness to suffer, feeling awkward during transition, dealing with failure, or constantly reliving the past.[6] Most of these feelings are legitimate. Nobody likes to endure the negative in order to reach a positive change.

Yet, the condition of the body of Christ yields itself to a period of suffering to yield an everlasting reward. What then causes the body suffering until it reaches its high ground? Generational gaps produce great tension. Many older generations reflect on days gone by. They are able to remember quickly about the dedication people had to the local church. They recall going to church all day. They remember the church as the epicenter of the community.

Today, a whole generation is not fully engage with that concept of the local church. Many messages are received in 140 characters. Bibles are accessible through apps on smartphones. Music is streaming on Spotify, and compact discs are antiques. The challenge remains to be missional to all generations and educate, equip, and empower all.

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[5] Henry Klopp, *The Ministry Playbook: Strategic Planning for Effective Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 82.

[6] Klopp, *The Ministry Playbook,* 83-85.

Reclaiming a biblical focus on spiritual empowerment can move us beyond these splits toward a more holistic embodiment of our faith.[7]

The church is considered to be the place where growth and development occur. It is the place where the believer should grow to the place of helping other in their understanding and relationship with God. Unfortunately, the church can be a place that impedes the progress. The congregation must be able to be flexible especially if it is a missional church. The church should not change for the sake of change, but it is willing to be in conversation with the disenfranchised. Why should anyone consider being a part of a community that would not value his or her existence?[8]

The goal of Pleasant Grove and any other church is to become an entity willing to move and engage with the Holy Spirit in discerning how reach and uplift those who want to become the people that God intends. What does this model truly look like in a digestible view? Six elements exist for the beginning of this process.

1. Relationship Development—Leadership and parishioners must be intentional in developing a relationship with one another. This process takes time. However, it requires willing people who are open to sharing who they are in Christ and their journeys that can help in Christian growth. The pastor has many experiences that guide and influence the path that has been taken. From that well, God has gifted that leader to share in the joys and pains of the parishioners. The member is also in a position to be a blessing to the leadership through his or her wealth of experience. Those moments become opportunities for encouragement, growth, and development.

2. Focused Worship—The worship experience must possess expectations that the people will meet God where they are. God must be the center of the activity of adoration. Worship becomes stale when it becomes mark on the to-do list. Worship must engage people of all ages, experiences, and backgrounds. It provides for the people unique encounters with God that are

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[7] F. Douglas Powe, *New Wine, New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 59.

[8] Powe, *New Wine New Wineskins,* 58-59.

not subject to one type of spirit movement. Worship should compel believers to be energized to go forward into the world make an impact on the world. We do the Spirit an injustice when we bottle it up in a way that keep it inside of the church.[9]

3. Teaching/Training—Everyone is need of constant development. That requires constant refreshers on the roles of leadership, the importance of the member, and the value of all people that come to the local body. A commitment must be made by everyone to engage in challenging dialogue to learn and understand relevant information to the growth of the church and individual Christian education.

4. Mission Statement Development—As the local body comes together as one, the church must develop a clear mission rooted in Biblical understanding, birthed from wrestling with previous issues, and focused on fulfilling the mandate God has given the local body.

5. Vision Planning—With training and equipping at work, leadership must watch and discern the movement of the Holy Spirit within the context. Vision planning will not begin with tangible assets. The vision will reflect the spiritual nature of the local body. All vision must be God breathed and spirit focused before anything else. If the body is not spiritually aware, it makes fulfilling the purpose of the church more challenging.

6. Execution—Each element presented ultimately leads to action. Once the congregation is equipped and educated, it must be empowered to move forward. Development is not for keeping the people in one area. It is the hope that people will become energized to take what has been given and go forward to demonstrate the joy and excitement that comes from the vision that God has given to the people.

The hope that springs from this work is that overtime; churches will recognize that anything that is done for the glory of God takes time, effort, and willingness. Along the journey, one may see that some people are not prepared for the complete work that comes with changing a culture. Many individuals desire the benefits of change, but the struggle and challenge is unwelcomed.

This work is not over. It is only the beginning of a greater opportunity. More conferences will take place. Greater interaction and fellowship will be forged. Worship

[9] Powe, *New Wine New Wineskins*, 61.

will become full of expectation. People will not feel as guilty about offering critique toward the betterment of the ministry. The opportunity is present. The harvest is within reach. The time to continue is now.

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